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Unshackling the Brain: Madness and Mental Illness in Mughal India, 1510-1708

By

Anurag Advani

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

South and Southeast Asian Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Professor Katharine Hodgkin (University of East London)

Summer 2024

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Abstract

Unshackling the Brain: Madness and Mental Illness in Mughal India, 1510-1708

by

Anurag Advani

Doctor of Philosophy in South and Southeast Asian Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Munis Faruqi, Chair

This dissertation explores how “madness” was conceptualized and perceived in early modern South Asia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Notions of insanity were constantly being reformulated in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates, as Indo-Iranian physician-scholars (*bakims*) experimented with extant Greco-Arabic (Unani) and Indic (Ayurvedic) medical theories. They proposed changing causes, symptoms, and treatments for various mental illnesses like excessive black bile in the brain (*saudayi*), melancholia (*malikholiya*), mania (*maniya*), lovesickness (*‘ishq*), encephalitis (*sarsam*), delirium (*huzyan*), rabies (*da’ ul-qalb*), epilepsy (*sar’a*), Satanic whisperings (*waswasa*), etc. Based on this, I argue that “madness” (*diwanagi* or *junun* in Persian) was a medical category whose knowledge became more widespread across north India and the Deccan. This scientific acumen about brain disorders was refracted and woven through accounts of political and gendered rebellion in imperial chronicles; through a reimagining of unreason and insanity in literary compositions by court poets, nobles, Sufi saints, and princesses; and through philosophical and legal debates on the nature of mental incapacity in ethical (*akhlāq*) treatises, jurisprudential (*fiqh*) manuals, and administrative documents.

The overlaps between these medical, political, literary, didactic, and juridical iterations of madness reveal an evolving, complex world of early modern knowledge about the brain and its maladies. Starting with the intermixing of Unani and Ayurvedic prescriptions for diagnosing and curing insanity in medical (*tibbi*) manuscripts under Lodi and early Mughal rule, I trace how madness was deployed by court chroniclers as a cudgel to dismiss the agency of male and female rebels. By the turn of the seventeenth century, significant innovations in tropes of wine-intoxication, jinn possession, melancholia and lovesickness became discernible across Persian poetry, occult manuals, scientific encyclopedias, and spiritual writings. This signals a heightened interest in the discourse of insanity that reached its apogee during the reigns of Shah Jahan (1628-58) and Aurangzeb ‘Alamgir (1658-1707), when there was a shift towards sharpening legalistic definitions of madness combined with more sophisticated classifications and treatments for psychological afflictions in pharmacopeia and medical treatises. In sum, my dissertation offers a multifaceted, intertextual cultural account of insanity and allied mental illnesses that resists the teleology of madpeople ostracized or “shackled” in lunatic asylums and subjected to Western psychiatry with the onset of British colonialism.

For my mother, Veena

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While it is customary to end by thanking one's family, I have only one person to mention in this regard: my mother Veena, without whom I could never have dreamed of embarking on this journey. This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to her.

Note on Transliteration

All translations are mine unless stated otherwise. By the same token, all errors are mine alone. Most of the manuscripts and archival sources cited in this dissertation are in Persian, and seldom in Arabic, Urdu, Hindavi or Sanskrit. I have avoided using diacritics for transliterations of Persian words for ease of reading. The only exceptions are *‘ain* (ع) and *hamza* (ء), which I have marked using an apostrophe (‘ or ’) in keeping with the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration chart. For most translations, I have relied on Sulayman Hayyim’s *New Persian-English Dictionary* and Francis Joseph Steingass’s *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, both available through the Digital Dictionaries of South Asia (DSAL) website powered by The University of Chicago. I also do not differentiate between similar-sounding Arabic letters like س, ث and ص, which are all transliterated with an “s”, between ض, ذ, ز and ظ, which are denoted with a “z”, and between ت and ط, which are both transcribed as “t”. For the most part, only Persian or other non-English terms and titles of books or manuscripts have been italicized. For names and titles, I use the more direct transliteration of suffix components – for example, “Abu al-Fazl” and “*Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*” as opposed to the more common and contemporary “Abu’l Fazl” and “*Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*”. All dates in this dissertation are in the common era (C.E.) based on the Gregorian calendar, except those dates from the Hijri calendar which are mentioned as A.H.

Introduction

In 1584, the Mughal court painter, Daswanth, who was known for his detailed style that adorns several illustrated manuscripts of the period, committed suicide in Agra by stabbing himself with a dagger in a fit of madness. Coming from relatively humble beginnings as the son of a palanquin-bearer (*kabar*), he quickly rose through the ranks in the imperial atelier and became the most well-known pupil of the legendary miniaturist Khwaja ‘Abd as-Samad. Contemporary Mughal sources tell us lamentably little about the onset of his insanity or the causes for his suicide. The *‘Ain-i Akbari* (“Annals of Emperor Akbar”, 1598) notes that “the darkness of insanity enshrouded the brilliance of his mind and he died, a suicide”.¹ Earlier in the same court chronicle, the *Akbarnama* (“Book of Akbar”), the author, Abu al-Fazl, observes how

[Daswanth]’s paintings were not behind those of Bihzad² and the painters of China. All at once melancholy took possession of him, and he wounded himself with a dagger. After two days he paid back the loan of life, grief came to the hearts of connoisseurs.³

Daswanth is often compared with Basawan, a famous Mughal miniaturist, in terms of his popularity and artistic prowess, evident in his illustrations from the *Razmnama* (“Book of War”, a translation of the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*), *Hamzanama* (“Tales of Amir Hamza”) and *Tutinama* (“Tales of the Parrot”) manuscripts commissioned by Akbar in the last decade of Daswanth’s life. Some of them include scenes of violence and frenzy that, according to Milo Beach, reflected his increasing inner turmoil, psychological disquietude, and descent into madness that led him to an early grave.⁴ Indeed, Akbar had a personal affinity with Daswanth due to the former’s emotionally turbulent childhood, to the extent that he had become the “personal protégé of the emperor”.⁵ His sudden death therefore caused quite a stir in the imperial atelier (*karkhana*).

What does the suicide of this famous Mughal painter tell us about conceptions of mental illness and insanity in early modern South Asia?⁶ How was madness experienced and perceived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in a world long predating the advent of asylums, psychiatry, or electroconvulsive therapy – all of which are associated with popular notions of late colonial or postcolonial forms of confinement and treatment of mental patients? In other words, how can we move past the shackles, literal and metaphorical, that the use of an umbrella term like “madness” conjures in our minds, to understand early modern attitudes to insanity in different contexts? In the anecdote above, there is an underlying assumption of the connections between artistic genius, creativity, and psychological instability. It suggests an acute awareness of how a passionate, extraordinary mind that produced visually stunning artefacts for posterity was, by the same token, equally susceptible to a debilitating mental illness like melancholia, leading to self-harm and suicide.

¹ Abu al-Fazl, *‘Ain-i Akbari* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1872), p. 116. In Persian: *tariki-yi junun bar darakshani-i dimagh-i ou ghalib shud wa ou az kbudkushi be-jannat rasid*.

² Bihzad (1455-1535) was a legendary Iranian painter from Herat under the Timurid and early Safavid empires, often hailed as the gold standard for Indo-Islamic miniaturists.

³ Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol. III (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1884), p. 651.

⁴ Milo Cleveland Beach, “The Mughal Painter Daswanth”, *Ars Orientalis, Freer Gallery of Art*, Vol. 13 (1982): 121-133.

⁵ Sherman Lee and Pramod Chandra, “A Newly Discovered *Tuti-Nāma* and the Continuity of the Indian Tradition of Manuscript Painting”, *The Burlington Magazine, Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. CV (1963): 17.

⁶ Daswanth’s insanity is reminiscent of the Aq Qoyunlu calligrapher ‘Abd al-Rahim Khwarizmi, who became known by the title *Padishah* (“emperor”) in Tabriz after he started ordering people around and developed an inflated hubris, which were associated with mental derangement and loss of senses. See Esra Akın-Kıvanç (ed. and trans.), *Mustafa Ali’s Epic Deeds of Artists: A Critical Edition of the Earliest Ottoman Text about the Calligraphers and Painters of the Islamic World* (Leiden and Boston: EJ Brill, Islamic History and Civilization, Vol. 87, 2011), pp. 99, 252-255; P.P. Soucek, “‘Abd-Al-Rahīm K̲w̲ārazmī,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1982): 143. I thank Rachel Hirsch for this reference.

The artwork of this time also reflects a growing concern with madness and melancholia, shedding light on the various moods and temperaments of mental patients. For instance, the painting below, titled “Disturbance by a Madman in a Social Gathering”, depicts a madman entering a caravanserai and disrupting a meeting of learned notables. He is unshaven, wearing a ragged blue skirt and white shirt, and seemingly conscious of the commotion his arrival has effected. He appears to be a misfit, a vagabond whose sudden appearance has startled the respectable attendees in this assembly (*majlis*), whose looks of shock and confusion are captured by the painter. The poetic inscription on top in Persian reads:

*When souls are gathered on the soil of my enemy,
Why should I run left and right like a madman?*

چون بجان اندر گردیست وطن دشمن من،
من چپ و راست چو دیوانه ز بهر چه دوم



Figure 1. “Disturbance by a Madman at a Social Gathering”, c.1600
Small Clive Album, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Another Mughal painting, “Portrait of an Old Sufi” (1615), was inspired by the German painter Albrecht Dürer’s “Melencolia I” from a hundred years before and possibly the artist Farrukh Beg’s last self-portrait before his death in 1619. The painting foregrounds a ruminating Sufi saint, perhaps a patient of melancholia, surrounded by a tree of wisdom, medicines for treatment, and animals representing peace and contemplation. These themes borrowed from pharmacological treatments for insanity prescribed in medical manuscripts of the time as well as the poetic trope of the lovesick madman (Majnun) surrounded by animals he had tamed in the wilderness. Taken together, these pictorial representations of psychological disturbance in Mughal India signal courtly interest in comprehending the inner workings of the brain at multiple levels: artistic, social, medical, and literary.



Figure 2. “Portrait of an Old Sufi” by Farrukh Beg, 1615
Mughal Album, Agra, © Museum of Islamic Art, Doha

This dissertation explores a broad cultural understanding of madness that developed and shifted gradually over the course of two centuries in South Asia. A central question that motivates this study is how a cross-section of professionals, including medical scholars (*bakims*), court chroniclers, Sufi saints, poets, philosophers, jurists (*fuqha*), theologians (*ulema*), Mughal official rank-holders (*mansabdars*), princes and princesses, as well as ordinary women and men, perceived insanity and mental illness from within their respective frameworks of knowledge. In what ways did these diverse perspectives speak to each other? This was a period of intellectual ferment and churning when ideas of philosophical irrationality, political disloyalty, gendered rebellion, spiritual ecstasy, literary unreason, and legal incapacity were cast in various molds of insanity. And yet, they were often bolstered by madness as a distinctly medical category of mental illness in both the Greco-Arabic (Unani) and Indic (Ayurvedic) traditions that were increasingly juxtaposed with each other.

Accordingly, this dissertation makes two key arguments. First, there was an increasing sophistication of medical knowledge about madness and allied mental illnesses in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates that resulted from scholarly experimentation with both the Unani and Ayurvedic medical canons. The nosology of brain disorders in Indo-Persian medical (*tibbi*) manuscripts expanded with sub-classifications like melancholia, delirium, mania, lovesickness, lycanthropy, Satanic whisperings, schizophrenia, epilepsy, encephalitis, and more. *Hakims* identified specific causes and treatments for each of these afflictions, which became more nuanced over time, even as they cited medieval Perso-Arabic polymaths or ancient Sanskrit medical authorities whose prescriptions remained relevant in the early modern period. Second, this scientific acumen about insanity was sometimes deployed in court chronicles, verse-narratives, poetic compilations, occult manuals, ethical treatises, judicial documents, and other such genres to serve different purposes. While the cudgel of insanity was weaponized to dismiss the agency of political rebels and women who overstepped patriarchal bounds during the reigns of Akbar (1556-1605) and Jahangir (1605-27), it was equally reinvented as a literary trope by Persian poets experimenting with the metaphors of wine-intoxication, jinn possession and lovesickness. By the mid-to-late seventeenth century, there was a move away from madness as rebellion to a sharper definition of legal incapacity in jurisprudential manuals as well as in documented court cases under Shah Jahan (r.1628-58) and Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (r.1658-1707).

Why “Madness”? Conceptual Frameworks and Methodology

The question that I have been repeatedly asked (and have asked of myself) as I navigated this vast array of primary sources is: why look for “madness”, or insanity, unreason, irrationality, or some equivalent of it? Aside from the methodological problem of searching for a needle in a haystack, does this English word and all the loaded connotations it carries skew our emic understanding of the Persian, Hindavi or Sanskrit concepts with which early modern scholars and lay people in South Asia were familiar? Mughal and Deccani sources contain descriptions of acts that were considered absurd or egregious, behaviors that were deemed odd, even bizarre. There are several stories of people exhibiting disloyalty, deceit, inebriation, violence, and extreme grief. Instinctively, one might be tempted to collapse all such aberrant actions into the hegemonic unity of madness. But to do so would be to impose our postmodern sensibilities on premodern sources.

In this dissertation, I have chosen to delineate madness only where the sources themselves specifically use terms that connote craziness, insanity, or some other variant. My approach is to tread carefully by not deciding arbitrarily whether certain actions should be categorized as “mad”. In paying close attention to the Persian words used in Mughal sources to describe these acts, we discover the subtle differences in their meaning. *Divanagi*, the most frequently used term, referred loosely to various kinds of madness. *Junun* was also used widely for insanity, but sometimes referred specifically to jinn (demonic) possession, since the Arabic root word for

junun is spelt *jim-nun-nun* or *jinn*. *Malikholiya* meant melancholia, which was similar in its symptoms to madness rather than to any modern psychiatric notion of clinical depression. *Saudayi* initially signaled a medicalized madness arising from the excess production of black bile or *sauda*, a popular theory originating in Galenic medicine for the humoral imbalance caused in the brain; but over time, it was also used in non-medical contexts. *Ishq* signified lovesickness, as in the poetic figure of the madman from the famous twelfth-century Persian narrative poem *Layla-Majnun*. *Shorish* was another commonly occurring term, usually translated as tumult, along with *ikhtilal* or mental confusion and *buzyan* or delirium. Importantly, the use of these terms could be medicalized in some cases while it was a social epithet in others. Madness could run the gamut from being a derogatory label for a crazy lunatic, as with political rebels, to an aspirational mental state of spiritual ecstasy or intoxication, as with poets and Sufi saints. There were specific classifications of brain disorder that rarely occurred outside of Unani and Ayurvedic medical manuscripts, even as their diagnoses changed and overlapped over time within the *tibbi* tradition. They included *maniya* (mania), *da' ul-kalb* (rabies), *qutrub* (lycanthropy), *sakta* (apoplexy), *faliy* (cerebral palsy), etc. Finally, terms for madness-adjacent psychological states like *sarsam* (encephalitis), *sar'a* (epilepsy), and *waswasa* (Satanic whisperings) appeared across political, legal, occult, literary and medical texts.

As I trawled through the archive of Indo-Persian sources, I began by looking for stories that might be framed through the lens of deviance or social aberrance. I was aware that the European theoretical discourse around these terms is weighty. For instance, deviance refers to the violation or subversion of socially accepted norms. According to Émile Durkheim, scholars have failed to "... distinguish the normal or abnormal character of social phenomena from their degree of generality."⁷ Durkheim formulated the structural-functionalist theory, which posits deviance as inherent in any given social order; it is not manufactured externally, but rather generated internally. It provides a mechanism of checks and balances within society, such that the identification and mitigation of deviance help reaffirm the society's cultural norms, unify it, reinstate morality, and promote social change. Moving away from this postulation that the utility of deviance lies only in its punishment, Robert Merton offered a critique through his strain theory, where he argued that deviance is an outlet for the strains and frustrations of working within institutional means, which do not guarantee the achievement of culturally approved goals. Deviance occurs alongside a feeling of disconnect from the rest of society ("anomie").⁸ Upon perusing Mughal and Deccani texts, however, it became apparent to me that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century South Asian authors were not thinking through the categories of deviance or aberrance – *inbihraf* is the nearest Persian word for which I unsuccessfully mined these texts.

I quickly realized that the Persian terms used in South Asian texts did not lend themselves to Eurocentric explanations of deviance, aberrance, or even "madness". Michel Foucault, in his pathbreaking tome *Madness and Civilization*, notes how multiple discourses around madness, as a form of folly, developed in late medieval France and England. Madness was perceived as an object of ridicule because of its ability to tell the truth in the form of a "deception of deception".⁹ The dazzling quality of reason made madness appear particularly egregious, and the need to acquire a "rational hold over madness"¹⁰ led to its increasing medicalization. This process identified various aspects of madness, such as mania, melancholia, hysteria, and hypochondria. By its seventeenth-eighteenth-century incarnation, madness was seen as removed from the immediacy of nature, and this was partly a function of the increasing distance between the roles of philosopher and physician. The devouring scourge of madness was now tamed and classified by the shackles of discipline and brutality, confined in asylums and hospitals, and

⁷ Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), pp. 73-74.

⁸ Robert Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1968), pp. 185-214.

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Random House Inc., 1965), 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

linked to the capacity for labor and productivity.¹¹ This is a European story of how madness evolved from its late-fifteenth-century moment, when it lurked beneath every human surface and was located very much within the ambit of everyday relationality, to a highly medicalized phenomenon in the eighteenth century that had to be contained and treated, sometimes even castigated. But Foucault's conceptions are not conducive to understanding insanity in a very different time and place. While they offer valuable insights into the wildness and indefinability of madness, Foucault's text is limited in its temporal and spatial scope, and cannot possibly explain the cultural registers of insanity deployed in early modern South Asia to varied ends, sometimes informed by contemporary medical acumen about mental illness and sometimes not.

I use "madness" and "insanity" in this dissertation with caution due to their European theoretical baggage as well as their postmodern connotations in both psychology and psychiatry. Freudian and Jungian models of psychoanalysis have influenced South Asian thinkers like Sudhir Kakar, Ashis Nandy, and Masud Khan. They advocate vigilance around using a term like madness, since psychopathology is closely linked with social history, and different cultures and historical epochs drew the line between unreason and insanity in varied ways. The physiological roots and mystical manifestations of madness were tied with each other in the Ayurvedic and Unani traditions, as theories of the mind evolved and explained mental illness as stemming from a range of causes, from spirit possession to humoral imbalance. The state's attempts to discipline, contain and manage it led to an intimate nexus between criminality, sickness and insanity.¹² On the other hand, psychiatrists, in keeping with the latest classifications of mental disorder in the *DSM-V*¹³, do not define the word "insanity" due to its pejorative imputations. Instead, they diagnose a whole host of thought and mood disorders that carefully record changes in cranial structure, neurotransmitters, and enzyme misfiring between the spinal cord and brain. At the same time, they focus on patients' individual experiences, their cultural backgrounds, childhoods, and past traumas that lead to their hallucinations, psychoses, or seizures. This biopsychosocial model of clinical psychiatry, first developed in 1977 by George Engel, has moved far from the language of madness.¹⁴ As a historian writing in the twenty-first century, I find these psychological and psychiatric concepts useful to keep in mind as comparative frames for my analysis of insanity in Mughal India, even though the language of mental illness and other non-medicalized notions of brain disorder used in Indo-Persian sources was vastly different.

The muddle of translatability is not simply a philological conundrum; it is also an inherently historical one. Madness, in challenging the rational order of things and the cognitive architecture that shapes everyday communication, also resembles the space where language meets its limits. What, then, might a "historical ontology"¹⁵ of madness look like for our

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 221-278. Interestingly, Georges Canguilhem, Foucault's doctoral advisor, argues that vilifying the practice of internment cannot explain how madness was dealt with throughout the entire Age of Enlightenment in Europe, and highlights the need to consider the administrative-judicial framework within which such a discourse unfolded. See Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

¹² See Marion Milner, *The Suppressed Madness of Sane Men: Forty-four Years of Exploring Psychoanalysis* (London: Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1987); Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Linda Hopkins, *False Self: The Life of Masud Khan* (New York: Other Press, 2006); Sudhir Kakar, *Mad and Divine: Spirit and Psyche in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and its Healing Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

¹³ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Revised Fifth Edition* (American Psychiatric Association, Booksmith Publishing, 2022).

¹⁴ See, among many others, Matthew Blakeway, *The Logic of Madness: A New Theory of Mental Illness* (Meyer LeBoeuf Ltd., 2016); Greg Eghigian (ed.), *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization* (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 2010); and T. Gomory, D. Cohen and S.A. Kirk, "Madness or Mental Illness? Revisiting Historians of Psychiatry", *Current Psychology*, Vol. 32 (2013): 119-135.

¹⁵ I borrow this term from Ian Hacking, who defines it as a study of how "we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others", along three axes: knowledge, power and ethics. See Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 2. For my purposes, I take this to initiate a discussion of how madness was inherently constituted and understood by South Asian actors – a thing that was not always already pre-defined and

purposes of studying it in Mughal and Deccani sources?

Turning to medieval Islamic formulations of insanity is more productive, since they provided a historically proximate scaffolding that shaped Mughal and Deccani understandings of madness. In this context, Michael Dols's *Majnun* offers three different conceptions of madness that emerged in Arabo-Persian texts written between the eighth and thirteenth centuries across the Middle East: madness as disease, a negative idea of pathological brain dysfunction that is curable by medicine; madness as deviation, a positive understanding of social divergence that is curable by religion; and madness as lack of intelligibility, a largely neutral model of the breakdown of rationality and reason that can lead to crime, and is curable by magic. Although the first of these definitions has dominated modern psychiatric discourse, Dols argues that the socio-religious interpretation held more weight in the medieval period. A more fluid comprehension of insanity would have prevailed due both to the lack of government control over people classified as such, and to the serious engagement with a realm of reality beyond the medical.¹⁶ With respect to the term *majnun* (literally translated as “madman”), Dols notes that

... Muhammad was accused by his opponents of being *majnun*, which God repeatedly denied. Although *majnun* is not defined in the Quran, the controversy about Muhammad's character indicates the possible meanings of the word for early Muslims: the jinn-possessed could be a poet or diviner, a sorcerer or a madman. Thus, from the inception of Islam, *majnun* was a familiar but ambiguous term.¹⁷

From this account, it can be inferred that the category of madness straddled medical, literary and philosophical representations in the medieval Islamic world.

I weave other disciplinary approaches into my dissertation as well, particularly from anthropology. Stefania Pandolfo's work on suffering, insanity, and religiosity in postmodern Morocco, offers me a window into understanding madness as spirit possession in Mughal India through the “trauma, passions, and ordeal of the soul”.¹⁸ This is especially relevant when exploring the philosophical underpinnings of Persianate notions of early modern insanity in preceding ethical (*akhlaq*) treatises that stressed the virtues and vices of the soul. Further, Sarah Pinto's study of asylums for women in north India sensitively unearths the predicament of “dumped women” under postcolonial conditions. Pinto argues for an “ethics of dissolution”, a need for a language of ethics and modes of psychiatric care removed from the asylum, where we can begin to orient ourselves towards dissolution and brokenness.¹⁹ In gesturing towards what I read as a post-asylum stage, this harks back to a pre-asylum phase when madness abounded in everyday discourse and was not confined to a physically segregated institution. The parallels between the post-asylum and the pre-asylum not only trouble our ideas of linear temporality, but also urge us to be more attuned to the marginality of madness stories in the South Asian archive.

The inability to really *know* the historical truth or reality of how people thought of madness and mental illness in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates, however, is a lingering tension. Instead of viewing madness as necessarily stigmatized or taboo, I propose to look for how the events cited in Indo-Persian sources are indicative of their writers' own intentions and

assumed, but rather constantly changing, decentering and re-fixing certain identities and behaviors through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

¹⁶ Michael W. Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 5-7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸ Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 16-18. For a psychological study of mental illness at the intersection of national, ethnic and gender identities in modern-day Turkey, see Sadeq Rahimi, *Meaning, Madness and Political Subjectivity: A Study of Schizophrenia and Culture in Turkey* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

¹⁹ Pinto, *Daughters of Parvati: Women and Madness in Contemporary India* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

thinking, rather than test the historical veracity of these accounts. That is, I am sensitive to the context of each text's production, and read Mughal and Deccani sources as imbued with authors' representations and assumptions. I believe this method helps us move towards a more emic understanding of the early modern period. I am not attempting to absolve myself of all historical responsibility in treating archive as text. Rather, my aim is to parse out the modes through which courtly and non-courtly, royal and plebian, male and female authors thought about different iterations of insanity. As Shoshana Felman argues, literature, knowledge and madness are all closely tied with each other.²⁰ I therefore precariously tread a tightrope between a positivist and literary reading of the sources through a historically guided textual analysis.

William Sherman's scholarship on the Roshanniya movement of Afghan Sufis in sixteenth-century Persian and Pashto sources is instructive for me to read the *texture* of madness in the early modern archive. Drawing on the anthropologist Webb Keane's idea of semiotic ideology,²¹ Sherman urges us to move away from a dispassionate, "cool" analysis of primary texts, and suggests attentiveness to the relationship between signs and the material world. How people conceive of and make meaning in their own world is a possible way of teasing out the social molds that the language of these sources seeks to convey. Thus, the language of Roshani and Mughal texts not just represents or designates the sixteenth-century world, but really constitutes it.²² Following this approach, I am attentive to the modes of articulation, lexical choices, symbolic gestures, and other such practices that make up the linguistic fabric of Indo-Persian sources.

Historiographical Interventions

While this dissertation can be conceived as falling under a "history of science" rubric, it is as much a cultural history and a history of knowledge creation. In providing a multifaceted account of insanity and psychological disorders in Mughal India, my dissertation contributes to four distinct fields of scholarship.

My **primary** contribution is to the historiography on early modern South Asia, where I draw inspiration from the interdisciplinarity of the "cultural turn" in recent scholarship. Works on Mughal and Deccani courtly conduct, like Mana Kia's *Persianate Selves* (2020), Emma Flatt's *Courts of the Deccan Sultanates* (2019), Rajeev Kinra's *Writing Self, Writing Empire* (2015), and Muzaffar Alam's *Languages of Political Islam in India* (2004), have stressed the importance of upholding etiquette (*adab*) and aspiring to ethical ideals (*akblaq*) among the nobility and royalty. What happened when this normative discourse of elite protocol was disrupted, in theoretical and practical ways, by madmen and madwomen? My dissertation shows how they shook the foundations of reason and logic that were valorized as necessary virtues in social interactions, ensuring imperial loyalty, and striving for fairness and justice. Their mental illness, if diagnosed as such, excused them from the fulfilment of official responsibilities. But in some cases, madness was a way to negate their consciousness and volition, to render them objects of pity or ridicule who were not in control of their senses.

This upending of state-sanctioned rationality was especially evident in cases of political infraction and gendered transgression. Madness was an integral component of the resistance to courtly and patriarchal hegemony. Munis Faruqui's study of princely rebellion in the high Mughal period is illuminating to comprehend how wars of succession did not weaken the empire but rather made it stronger by drawing in local elites from various regions of South Asia,²³ an insight

²⁰ Felman, *Writing and Madness (Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis)* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

²¹ Keane, "On Semiotic Ideology", *Metasemiosis and Social Life: Essays in Honor of Michael Silverstein, Signs and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2018): 64-87.

²² William E.B. Sherman, *Singing with the Mountains: The Language of God in the Afghan Highlands* (New York City: Fordham University Press, 2023).

²³ Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

that helps me understand the disloyalty of itinerant nobles and rulers who were castigated for their supposed insanity by Mughal chroniclers in imperial histories (*tarikhs*). These mad Mughal officials and recalcitrant Deccani Sultans were also constitutive of the patchwork of political power, economic exchange, and landlord (*zamindari*) revolts that fostered the process of state formation, as Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have argued.²⁴ Further, Ruby Lal's *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (2005) spotlighted the neglected lives of women in the Mughal harem and beyond, in addition to articles by Shireen Moosvi, Shadab Bano, Katherine Schofield, and Emma Kalb on women's labor, property rights, music and dance, and challenging gender binaries, respectively.²⁵ Taking this forward, stories of madwomen and their breach of societal expectations, whether in historical or literary texts, signal a powerful way of inscribing their non-conformity in the archival record. I am also attentive to how male and female madness were perceived differently since the gendered imbalances in their anatomical and sociological behaviors were thought to result in varied articulations of insanity.

In the field of Persian literature, the tropes of wine-intoxication and love-madness were not merely received conventions from the classical poetry of Sa'di, Nizami, Rumi and Hafez. Scholars like Paul Losensky, Sunil Sharma, James White, Jane Mikkelsen, and Prashant Keshavmurthy have uncovered innovative forms of literary modulation in the Mughal context.²⁶ This has led to a reappropriation of the term *Sabk-i Hindi* ("Indian style"), formerly dismissed as a stillborn Renaissance in Persian poetry.²⁷ Building on these works, I study the changing metaphors of insanity in several poetic manuscripts, some of a Sufi bent, produced across north India and the Deccan. In unpacking the registers of irrationality and unreason in poetic compilations (*divans*), verse-narratives (*masnavis*), and stray musings that have survived, my dissertation notes the dynamism of Indo-Iranian poets who displayed their awareness of the tradition while playing with new modes of literary expression. Poetry was also not a realm divorced from politics or medicine, since princes, nobles and *bakims* all wrote in verse about various kinds of psychological affliction.

The evolution of legal notions of mental incapacity during the reigns of the fifth and sixth Mughal emperors, in the mid-to-late seventeenth century, reflects the constitution of Mughal law as an absorptive, capacious, and flexible institution. Nandini Chatterjee's *Negotiating Mughal Law* (2020) and Farhat Hasan's *State and Locality in Mughal India* (2005), as well as his *Paper, Performance, and the State* (2021), have shown how the Sharia was only a small part of practical jurisprudence. Courts adjudicated by Muslim judges (*qazis*) acted in concert with customary laws and regional adaptations from both the Hindu and Muslim legal habitus to arbitrate on cases of property dispute, marriage and divorce, as well as criminal charges of rape, theft or murder. In keeping with these findings, Chapter Four of my dissertation undertakes a close study of madness,

²⁴ Alam and Subrahmanyam (eds.), "Introduction", *The Mughal State, 1526-1750* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁵ See Moosvi, "Ch 7: Work and Gender in Mughal India", in *People, Taxation and Trade in Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008); Bano, "Women and Property in Mughal India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (2007): 406-415; Schofield, "The courtesan tale: Female musicians and dancers in Mughal historical chronicles, c. 1556-1748", *Gender and History*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2012): 150-171; and Kalb, "Framing Gender in Mughal South Asia", *History Compass*, Vol. 19, No. 11 (2021): e12691, 1-10.

²⁶ See Losensky, *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998); Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); White, *Persian and Arabic Literary Communities in the Seventeenth Century: Migrant Poets between Arabia, Iran and India* (London: IB Taurus, 2023); Mikkelsen, "Of Parrots and Crows: Bidil and Hazin in their Own Words", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2017): 510-30; and Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²⁷ For older ideas on *sabk-i hindi*, see Muhammad Taqi Bahar, *Sabk-Shenasi: Tarikh-i Tatavwur-o-Nasr-i Farsi*, in 4 vols. (Tehran: Chapkhana-yi Sipahr, 1942); and Ehsan Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline?" in *Persian Literature*, ed. Yarshater (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 249-88. A strong critique of this formulation was put forth by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A Stranger In The City: The Poetics of *Sabk-i Hindi*", *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 19 (2004): 1-59.

encephalitis, and epilepsy in royal edicts (*farmans*) and other legal documents, correlated with discussions of mental illness in contemporary medical treatises, as well as the insanity defense in Hanafi jurisprudential compendia.

Secondly, my dissertation provides a prehistory to scholarship on madness in British India in the late-eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, which has focused for the most part on the lunatic asylum. In staying with a broader cultural discourse of madness in the early modern period, I resist the teleology of the emergence of asylums, and of psychiatry as a colonial discipline. There is something to be said for the relationship between madness, marginality and resistance in Mughal India, but one that was not mediated through the space of the asylum. While the first Muslim mental health care units in the subcontinent opened in Delhi and Mandu in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, it wasn't until the mid-eighteenth century that the first mental health institutions emerged under British rule. The earliest mental hospital was established in Bombay in 1745, which accommodated around thirty mentally ill patients, and the institution quickly spread to other parts of British India. The first modern psychiatric hospital in Bengal, for instance, was opened under Lord Cornwallis in 1784. Such asylums catered mostly to shell-shocked British soldiers, and very few, if any, Indian patients were admitted.²⁸

Waltraud Ernst's *Mad Tales from the Raj* (1991) was among the first expositions on the predicament of the insane in colonial South Asia, although her account deals primarily with lunatic asylums for British patients in the three presidency cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. While there was deep-rooted social and racial exclusion between "native-only" and European asylums, the same institutions epitomized British claims to humanitarianism, superiority, and civilizational progress. State control was paramount in the European asylum due to a strong belief in the panopticon.²⁹ Asylum reports suggest long-term deterioration in the living conditions of patients, who were mostly former members of the British army and navy. The rise of psychiatry brought new rigor and discipline to a hitherto corruption-infested medical practice. By the mid-nineteenth century, legal provisions like the Indian Lunatic Asylum Act of 1858 introduced uniform asylum procedures in India and England, standardizing diagnoses and treatments of mental illness. Ernst's articles grapple with European and "native" asylums in nineteenth-century India,³⁰ while her later writings center on the Ranchi Mental Hospital.³¹

Following Ernst's pathbreaking work, several studies of colonial asylums and madness in South Asia have surfaced in recent years. James Mills argues that in the aftermath of the rebellion of 1857, the high-handedness of administrators and the medical practice of doctors elicited resistance from the "native bodies" of Indian patients. The latter disobeyed orders to work, refused food, insulted doctors, masturbated, initiated sexual intercourse, and, in extreme cases, committed suicide. From 1871, experiments to test the effects and extent of the use of cannabis led British officials to link disobedience to cannabis consumption. The male asylum-dweller's emaciated body and his behavior were immediately recognized as being under the influence of

²⁸ S. Haque Nizami and Nishant Goyal, "History of Psychiatry in India", *Journal of Indian Psychiatry*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2010): S7–S12.

²⁹ The panopticon was a model developed by Jeremy Bentham as a precursor to the modern surveillance state. In asylums, the inspection mechanism of a large confining institution with a state-appointed watchman observing dwellers induced fear among the latter, allowing the British state to regulate the behavior of European mental patients as well as colonize the Indian mind. See Bentham (ed. Miran Božovič), *The Panopticon Writings* (Verso, 1995).

³⁰ See Ernst, "European Madness and Gender in Nineteenth-century British India," *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Dec 1996): 357–382; Ernst, "Idioms of Madness and Colonial Boundaries: The Case of the European and 'Native' Mentally Ill in Early Nineteenth-Century British India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jan 1997): 153–181.

³¹ Ernst, "Practicing 'Colonial' or 'Modern' Psychiatry in British India? Treatments at the Indian Mental Hospital at Ranchi, 1925–1940," *Transnational Psychiatries: Social and Cultural Histories of Psychiatry in Comparative Perspective, c. 1800–2000*, eds. Ernst and Thomas Mueller (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 80–115; *Colonialism and Transnational Psychiatry: The Development of an Indian Mental Hospital in British India, c. 1925–1940* (London: Anthem Press, 2013).

ganja, while infanticide was often the reason for female dwellers' incarceration.³² However, Anouska Bhattacharya postulates that the asylum did not start as a site for enforcing colonial discipline, prescribed psychiatric medicine and British hegemony, but rather evolved in that direction. The asylum, to begin with, was a permeable, hybrid space that far from epitomized the efficiency of colonial state control; on the contrary, it rendered local actors and agents – dwellers, native doctors, tea sellers, holy men – visible. This heterogeneity was lost as asylum laws instituted from 1858 to 1912 regularized psychiatric treatment and patient confinement.³³

In addition, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962), which detail the dehumanizing racist ideologies of colonialism and their detrimental psychological effects, have engendered a spate of works on colonial psychiatry.³⁴ For instance, Debjani Das and Amit Ranjan Basu show how British doctors in colonial asylums in Bengal sought to define and medicalize insanity through the experiences of mental patients. While they offered innovative cures like padded rooms, handcuffs, baths, occupational therapy, exposure to educational materials, and the use of games to asylum dwellers, individual access to this medical care depended on one's gender, class, caste, age, religion, and nature of affliction.³⁵ On the other hand, Shilpi Rajpal's *Curing Madness?* (2021) touches on quotidian aspects of life in the asylums of twentieth-century north India. She shows how the faqirs, pandits, ojhas, shamans, and maulanas who had earlier provided spiritual healing to the insane were now dismissed by British doctors and Western-trained psychiatrists as quacks and frauds.

This scholarship on colonial asylums in British India serves as the foil against which it becomes possible to identify the stark differences in attitudes to insanity as part of an early modern weltanschauung. Ayurvedic and Unani manuscripts produced under Mughal and Deccani patronage proposed changing diagnoses and remedies for diseases of the brain (*amraz-i sar*) that did not seek to ostracize or institutionalize patients. When read alongside anecdotes of rebellious noblemen and women who were chastised for their irrationality in court chronicles like the *Akbar Nama* and *Tarikh-i Firishta*, literary explorations of an ontological experience of mental disturbance in the poetry of Zuhuri, Bedil and Zeb-un-Nisa, and ethical, lexical and legal definitions of insanity in the Golconda dictionary *Burhan-i Qati'* or the Mughal jurisprudential manual *Fatava-yi 'Alamgiri*, we discover the intertwined intellectual culture of Persianate South Asia that was not preoccupied with isolating and "curing" madness. Concerted efforts were made to comprehend its forms and manifestations rather than simply treat it as a socially deviant malady whose sufferers needed to be shackled and separated from mainstream society. Nobles, poets and jurists would sometimes borrow medical terminology about specific mental illnesses to legitimize their claims, but did not view their treatment as the sine qua non for maintaining a healthy body politic. Mughal and Deccani manuscripts offer an understanding of madness and allied psychological afflictions not interpellated by (post)colonial psychiatric categories. I am resistant to delineating a singular trend towards somatization, or couching Mughal perceptions of insanity as being rooted in either tradition or modernity.

Thirdly, works on Islamic medicine and occult science in the medieval and early modern periods inform my research on madness and mental illness in Mughal India. Scholars of South Asia have highlighted the increasingly sophisticated medical culture across various regions of the

³² James Mills, *Madness, Cannabis and Colonialism: The "Native-Only" Lunatic Asylums of British India* (London: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

³³ Anouska Bhattacharya, "Indian Insanes: Lunacy in the 'Native' Asylums of Colonial India, 1858-1912" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2013).

³⁴ See Megan Vaughan, "Madness as Colonialism, Colonialism as Madness: Re-Reading Fanon. Colonial Discourse and the Psychopathology of Colonialism", *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, Bd. 39 (1993): 45-55; Ranjana Khanna, "The Lumpenproletariat, the Subaltern, the Mental Asylum", *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2013), Vol. 112, No. 1: 129-143.

³⁵ Debjani Das, *Houses of Madness: Insanity and Asylums of Bengal in Nineteenth Century India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015); Amit Ranjan Basu, "A New Knowledge of Madness: Nineteenth Century Asylum Psychiatry in Bengal," *Indian Journal of History of Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2004): 247-77.

subcontinent between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, while Fabrizio Speziale has studied the intermingling of Ayurvedic and Unani medicine in manuscripts like the *Tibb-i Shihabi* (1388) and the *Tlajat-i Dara Shukohi* (1647), Seema Alavi argues that *tibbi* textual production was closely tied to political theory, and Sultanate and Mughal rulers actively modulated medical knowledge as a tool for political legitimacy.³⁶ But this textual patronage was more than simply a means to cultivate loyalty among doctors and medical theorists or make them better functionaries of the empire. Through the prism of insanity, I build on the works of Speziale, Alavi, and other scholars³⁷ to show how this developing scientific corpus led to the proliferation of medical terminology and acumen in the wider public. The expanding classifications and treatments for mental illness thus demonstrate the intellectual curiosity and spirit of experimentation among *hakims* and their Mughal and Deccani patrons, while also indicating ever-changing medical standards.

In the broader history of Islamic medicine, the scholarship of Manfred Ullmann, Emily Savage-Smith, Peter Pormann, Nahyan Fancy, and Ahmed Ragab³⁸ helps frame the contours of my project. Much of the *tibbi* knowledge contained in Indo-Persian manuscripts drew on earlier precedents set by Arabo-Persian polymaths who were in turn building on the ancient Greek humoral model propounded by Hippocrates, Rufus and Galen. According to the tenth-century physician al-Razi (d. 925), the term *majnun* was used widely as a lay form of address for anyone suffering from epilepsy, melancholia or mental confusion, although these categories were distinguishable from each other:

The epileptic is healthy except during attacks of the disease. The melancholic does not have insomnia, does not eagerly approach other people, and is not very confused in his speech, and sometimes he is no different from the healthy except for his brooding over trifling things ... As for madness, its victim is characterized by jumping about, quick and vigorous movements, insomnia and persistent mental confusion.³⁹

This foundation was crucial for the commentaries and innovations of early modern South Asian *hakims*, who brought their knowledge of Ayurveda to bear on Unani precepts of mental illness. They therefore participated in a larger Islamicate ecumene while making a strong case for the distinctive nature of Indo-Persian medicine. Comparisons with Safavid and Ottoman medical cultures are also fruitful to contextualize Mughal and Deccani views on insanity in their own time. Cyril Elgood's work is a standard reference for a longue durée study of Persianate medicine,⁴⁰ while Miri Shefer-Mossensohn has offered a nuanced study of the professionalization of Ottoman physicians and hospitals.⁴¹

Going beyond Islamic medicine, the scholarship of Matthew Melvin Koushki, Eva Orthmann and Kathryn Babayan has blazed a new trail in orienting the field towards more

³⁶ Seema Alavi, "Ch 1: Indo-Muslim Medicine: Unani in Pre-modern India," in *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600-1900* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007); Alavi, "Medical Culture in Transition: Mughal Gentleman Physician and the Native Doctor in Early Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5 (2008): 853-897. I discuss Speziale's articles and these manuscripts in greater detail in Chapters 1, 3 and 4.

³⁷ History of medicine is a burgeoning field for medieval and early modern South Asia. Malavika Binny, Anthony Cerulli, Amrita Chattopadhyay, Eric Moses Gurevitch, Shireen Hamza, Deborah Schlein, Neha Vermani, Sonia Wigh, Anna Winterbottom, and Dagmar and Dominik Wujastyk, among others, are uncovering hitherto unexplored medical sources that deftly combined the Unani and Ayurvedic traditions.

³⁸ Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978); Savage-Smith and Pormann, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007); Fancy, *Science and Religion in Mamluk Egypt: Ibn al-Nafis, Pulmonary Transit and Bodily Resurrection* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); and Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital: Medicine, Religion and Charity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁹ Dols, *Majnun* (1992), p. 59. See also KS Durrany, "Arab Psychiatry", *Studies in the History of Medicine*, No. iv: 214-24.

⁴⁰ Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate: From the Earliest Times Until the Year A.D. 1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), esp. Chapter 13 on the Safavids, pp. 348-391.

⁴¹ Shefer-Mossensohn, *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500-1700* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

careful readings of Persian occult manuals that were not extra-scientific but rather integral to the world-making of Safavid and Mughal actors. Astrology, sorcery, alchemy, geomancy and lettrism, each had their long intellectual traditions that impacted everyday decision-making for both courtly and non-courtly elites.⁴² Drawing on these insights, I read early modern treatises on physiognomy (*‘ilm al-firasat*), dream interpretation (*ta’bir-i khwab*), demonic possession (*taskhir-i jinn*), and erotology or sensual pleasure (*surur* or *lazẓat*) that gave prescriptive advice to patients of madness and other mental illnesses. When studied in tandem with their medical, political, legal, philosophical and literary counterparts, these occult visions of insanity uncloak a parallel reality where talismans, incantations, black magic, and genies coexisted with the rational, material realm.

Fourthly, my dissertation highlights the uniqueness of insanity in precolonial South Asia within the field of comparative histories of madness across early modern Eurasian contexts. The works of Michael MacDonald, Roy Porter, Katharine Hodgkin, and Philippa Carter offer various perspectives on madness in Tudor and Stuart England.⁴³ A magisterial monograph in this regard is H.C. Erik Midelfort’s *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (1999), which starts with an account of the spirit possession of a Flemish artist and a kind of “dancing mania” that overcame a number of patients across Strasbourg and Alsace. Midelfort goes on to describe religious understandings of madness, early modern psychiatry, the legal development of the insanity defense, folly in princely courts, the miracles and healing of the mad, and the mad in social institutions and hospitals in Renaissance Germany.⁴⁴ Moreover, Elizabeth Mellyn’s *Mad Tuscans and Their Families* (2014) navigates the financial and legal repercussions of insanity in early modern Italy. She undertakes a thorough investigation of three hundred records to foreground familial networks of care and concern around the management of business and trading guilds, uncovering the deep insecurities of Florentine families who dragged their mentally incapacitated members to court. Finally, Elena Carrera’s work on melancholia in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain illustrates the diverse moral, medical and judicial debates on madness and folly (*locura*) that included arbitrating over the affective states of mental patients.⁴⁵

In reading this scholarship, the intricate details of vignettes about insanity in European sources are striking. By contrast, the somewhat elusive or unyielding quality of South Asian sources makes them recalcitrant to the purpose of easily piecing together microhistories of madpersons. Often, all we are left with are tantalizing fragments of their life. I try and contextualize them by reading against the grain of prescriptive texts, medical, poetic and legal, which don’t necessarily fill these glaring gaps. Going through the Indo-Persian archive with a fine-toothed comb for some obscure source that might help square the circle often proved to be a futile search. Lamentably, as with the opening anecdote about the Mughal court painter Daswanth, the mindscapes and psychological journeys of these actors are left incomplete, pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that remain mismatched to form a jagged, uneven whole.

⁴² Koushki, “The Occult Sciences in Safavid Iran”, and Orthmann, “The Occult Sciences at the Mughal Court in the Sixteenth Century”, in Hani Khafipour (ed.), *The Empires of the Near East and India: Source Studies of the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal Literate Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), pp. 344-365, 384-402; Orthmann and Nader El-Bizri (eds.), *The Occult Sciences in Pre-modern Islamic Cultures* (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2018); Melvin-Koushki, Farouk Yahya, Francesca Leoni and Liana Saif (eds.), *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); and Kathryn Babayan, “The Cosmological Order of Things in Early Modern Safavid Iran”, in *Book of Omens: The Fānāma*, ed. Massumeh Farhad (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Exhibition Catalogue, 2009).

⁴³ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1981); Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987); Hodgkin, *Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Carter, “Childbirth, ‘Madness’, and Bodies in History”, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (2021): 29-50.

⁴⁴ See also E.R. Harvey, “The inward wits: psychological theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”, *Warburg Institute Survey*, No. vi (1975): 15-21.

⁴⁵ Carrera, “Madness and Melancholy in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain: New Evidence, New Approaches”, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, Vol. 87, No. 8 (2010): 1-15; “Mental Affliction, Deviance and Culpability in Sixteenth-Century Spain: Beyond Binary Categories”, *eHumanista*, No. 36 (2017): 23-41.

Histories of madness in Asia more closely approximate my experience of reading Mughal and Deccani manuscripts. In this vein, Sara Scalenghe discusses madness in Ottoman Turkey as an impairment of the mind that impacted the everyday functioning of mental patients, even as the ecstatic trances and high spiritual states of Sufi saints constituted a form of holy madness that was aspired to rather than medicalized.⁴⁶ Histories of madness in early modern Japan, China, and Tibet provide an alternative outlook: while W. Puck Brecher focuses on the insane genius of artists under the Tokugawa regime, Hsiu-fen Chen emphasizes the conjunction of female sexuality, medicine and demonic madness in Ming China, and David DiValerio details how crazy Buddhist monks traversed the valleys of Ü and Tsang.⁴⁷ Echoing this multivocality, scientific advancements in diagnosing and treating mental illness overlapped with notions of spirit possession, divine madness, psychological tumult, sexual agency, and political instability in Mughal India. *Majzûbs*, for instance, were a category of Sufi saints who were revered for their madness and direct access to God. These insane mystics challenged normative *tariqa*-based Sufism with their ecstatic trances, metaphysical wisdom, miraculous powers, bodily experimentation, and subversive engagements with the state.⁴⁸

Archival Genres and Outline of Chapters

Archival catalogs across various libraries in South Asia and the UK categorize Persian manuscripts by genre. They range from poetry, history, and medicine to occult sciences, administrative documents, legal treatises, illustrated texts, and more. But in mining these sources for instances of madness and other mental illnesses, I realized how the boundaries between these genres are porous. Medical texts could be written in verse, courtly histories could include poetry from far-flung regions of the empire, philosophical and jurisprudential manuals could employ Unani terminology to describe legal statutes for the insane, and literary oeuvres of poets were impacted by political conditions, ethical norms, and scientific acumen. How can we as twenty-first-century readers of these Indo-Persian texts remain attuned to the conventions of each genre while reading them as mutually intelligible and constantly borrowing from each other? My dissertation is sensitive to how these epistemic intersections reveal an ever-shifting, interdisciplinary world of early modern knowledge production about psychological disturbance and mental instability.

There are four chapters in this dissertation. While each of them is structured around a theme, there is a chronological arc that takes the historical narrative of changing understandings of madness and other mental illnesses forward. Medical notions of brain disorder in Sultanate and early Mughal manuscripts are foregrounded in the first chapter but remain a continuous thread through the remaining chapters as well.

Thus, Chapter One, “Madness as Mental Illness: The Evolution of Indo-Persian Medical Knowledge, 1510-55”, discusses evolving categories of mental illness like insanity, delirium, melancholia, mania, rabies, and lycanthropy in Ayurvedic and Unani manuscripts. Following a survey of insanity in medieval Perso-Arabic and ancient Sanskrit medical treatises, I demonstrate the increasing hybridization of Ayurvedic and Unani humoral theories under Sultanate and early Mughal patronage. A close reading of Miyan Bhuwa’s *Tibb-i Sikandari* (“Medicine of Sikandar Lodi”) displays attempts to translate Sanskritic knowledge for Persian readers through categories

⁴⁶ Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. Chapter 3, pp. 88-124.

⁴⁷ Brecher, *The Aesthetics of Strangeness: Eccentricity and Madness in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013); Chen, “Medicine, society, and the making of madness in imperial China” (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 2003) and “Between Passion and Repression: Medical Views of Demon Dreams, Demonic Fetuses, and Female Sexual Madness in Late Imperial China”, *Late Imperial China*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2011): 51-82; and DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴⁸ See my article, “The Madness of the *Majzûbs*: Three Sufi Hagiographies in Sixteenth-Century Mughal India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 65, No. 1-2 (2022): 27-73.

like *unmada* (madness) and *bhut-unmada* (spirit possession). This heralded a flurry in production of medical texts across the Persianate world, from Yusuf al-Haravi's *Jami' al-Fawa'id* ("Encyclopedia of Advantages") in Timurid Herat to *Dastur al-Ilaj* ("Rules for Therapeutics") in Samarqand, Yusufi's *Ain al-Hayat* ("Essence of Life") in Delhi, and Rustam Jurjani's *Zakbira-yi Nizamshahi* ("Treasures of Nizam Shah") in Ahmednagar. I study the changing etiology of brain disorders in these manuscripts in conjunction with anecdotes about madpeople in Indo-Persian court chronicles.

Chapter Two, "Madness as Rebellion: Politics, Gender and Medicine during the Reign of Emperor Akbar, 1556-1605", connects emerging medical knowledge with the misgovernance of Deccani Sultans and insurrections by Mughal courtiers. Murtaza Nizam Shah (r.1565-88) of Ahmednagar's erratic administrative policies and family travails invited ridicule, justifying his popular appellation '*Divana*' (madman). In the Mughal Empire, some nobles like Shah Abu al-Ma'ali and Khwaja Mu'azzam were castigated for their imperial disobedience, violence and outright rebellion, while others like Maulana Ghazali Mashhadi appropriated the label of insanity to express sorrow at being unjustly condemned. The chapter also undertakes an exploration of gendered resistance against patriarchal norms. A case in point is Mohini, the wife of a Hindu goldsmith in Agra, who transgressed prescribed familial, religious and class boundaries. Given the paucity of female voices in the historical record, I turn to literary texts like *Nal-Daman* and the *Tutinama* where women demonstrated or even feigned insanity to exercise agency. Finally, the madness and suicide of Manbhawati Bai (d.1605), a Rajput princess in the Mughal harem, reflects the hereditary nature of mental afflictions.

Chapter Three, "Madness as Poetic Unreason: Wine-Intoxication, Literary Reformulation and Sufi Wisdom, 1595-1690", showcases a literary transformation in South Asia over the seventeenth century brought by Indo-Persian poets experimenting with extant tropes of madness and mental illness. I use poetic texts like Zuhuri's *Saqinama* ("The Cupbearer's Song"), several regional adaptations of the Layla-Majnun legend, and Bedil's *Tilism-i Hairat* ("Talisman of Wonder") to show how poets built on medieval poetic traditions while undertaking a new literary reinvention that was part of an Indo-Persian fresh-speaking (*taẓa-gu'ī*). In actively responding to their Mughal and Deccani environs, they innovatively crafted new registers for discussing wine-intoxication, altered states of mind, demonic possession, and lovesickness. Meanwhile, Sufi poetic texts like Mulla Shah Badakhshi's *Risala-yi Divana* ("Treatise on the Madman") and Zeb-un-Nisa's *Divan-i Makbfi* ("Poetry of the Veiled One") transcreated earlier conventions and tropes of irrationality, spiritual ecstasy, and philosophical discussions of the lines between reason and unreason. Medical, occult, and poetic knowledge thus went hand-in-hand with political discussions of madness in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates.

Chapter Four, "Madness as Ethico-Legal Incapacity: Defining Insanity in *Akhlāq*, Politics, Jurisprudence, and Medicine, 1620-1708", focuses on philosophical and juridical codifications of madness during the mid-to-late seventeenth century. Medieval Persian ethical (*akhlāq*) treatises in the "mirror for princes" genre moored the cultural milieu of South Asia, imbuing the discourse of madness with complex questions of morality, rationality, and gnosis. Undercurrents of this theoretical foundation are palpable in administrative documents from the reigns of Emperors Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58) and Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (r. 1658-1707), along with court chronicles like the *Padshahnama* and *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*. They reflect an emerging legal conception of insanity, epitomized by the fate of refractory nobles like Khan Jahan Lodi and heterodox saints like Sarmad. The *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri* ("Commandments of 'Alamgir") stipulated how insanity incapacitated mental patients from performing ablutions or making their own decisions about marriage and divorce, while also lending them immunity in cases of murder. Finally, lexical definitions of mental illness and advancing Unani and Ayurvedic knowledge under 'Alamgir cemented a move away from earlier politico-medical conceptualizations of madness.

The dissertation ends by hinting at the comingling of scientific, poetic, and imperial notions of insanity in the early-eighteenth century.

Chapter 1: Madness as Mental Illness The Evolution of Indo-Persian Medical Knowledge, 1510-1555

One day in c. 1510 CE, a nobleman appeared at the court of Sultan Sikandar Lodi in Delhi. He recited a Persian couplet:

*Good manners are a prerequisite if a boy is impertinent,
For a mad dog, the medicine is a clod of earth.*⁴⁹

ادب شرط است گر فرزند شوخ است،
سگ دیوانه را دارو کلوخ است.

The Sultan was pleased with this couplet, but wanted to know the precise connection between the “mad dog” (*sag-i diwana*), “medicine” (*daru*) and the “clod of earth” (*kalukh*). He reasoned that hurling a clod of earth at the mad dog could make it behave properly, but could not cure it of its affliction – only medicine could do that. Sikandar Lodi clearly knew that not only was madness a legitimate mental illness, but also that only certain medical concoctions could help treat it. For him, therefore, the question arose: how could medicine be as worthless as a clod of earth to treat the dog’s madness?

When no one could answer him satisfactorily, a close confidante of Sultan Sikandar stepped forward. He was Shaikh Said Khan-i Khanan Farmuli, also known by the honorific “Khwajagi”, an Afghan noble whose sons controlled many land revenue assignments (*iqtas*) across north India.⁵⁰ The Khwajagi answered that the correct Persian word in the verse should have been *kilukh* (a type of medicinal grass) and not *kalukh* (clod of earth). *Kilukh*, also known as *karmi* or *pindhi* in Hindi, grew in the rainy season, and while some varieties grew black in color, other kinds of *kilukh* had white spots. It was often given to dogs to cure their madness, and to those humans they had bitten. In the latter case, *kilukh* was mixed with milk pudding and molasses. While the nobles in the gathering agreed with the Khwajagi’s interpretation, they asked about the relevance of good manners (*adab*) in the first verse. The Khwajagi clarified that just as a dog becomes more well-behaved after being cured of its madness, so too does an impertinent son acquire good etiquette when he is taught with affection and love. If this method of teaching *adab* was not followed, said the Khwajagi, then the boy would go awry, exactly as “... the mad dog becomes more insane when it is disturbed”.⁵¹

This story in the *Waqi’at-i Mushtaqi*, a later Mughal account about Afghan rule in north India, reflects a preliminary understanding of madness among dogs and medicinal cures for it. While the Perso-Arabic term for rabies (*da’ ul-kalb*) is not used here, the suggestion to consume the *kilukh* grass indicates the circulation of medical knowledge about various cures for dog-madness or rabies. How did this technical information about madness and related mental illnesses enter a poetic recitation? Why did Sultan Sikandar Lodi raise concerns about the specific cures for madness, and how did Khwajagi Farmuli come to have such a detailed medical explanation to satisfy him? At a broader level, what did it mean to have a discussion about madness in a poetic and political context, while maintaining its medical specificity?

These questions force us to carefully think through the production of medical knowledge about the category of “madness” (*divanagi*, *junun*, *saudayi*) in early-sixteenth-century South Asia.

⁴⁹ For this verse, and the anecdote that follows, see Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqi, *Waqi’at-i Mushtaqi* (1569), ed. and ann. by I.H. Siddiqui and W.H. Siddiqui (Rampur, UP: Rampur Raza Library, 2002), p. 171; *Waqi’at-i Mushtaqi*, trans. I.H. Siddiqui (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research and Northern Book Centre, 1993), pp. 188-189.

⁵⁰ For more on the Farmuli nobles and their rise to power under Sikandar Lodi’s rule, see Bernhard Dorn, “History of the Reign of Sultan Sekunder, Son of Sultan Behlol,” in *History of the Afghans: Translated from the Persian of Neamat Ullah* (London: Oriental translation committee, 1829), pp. 55-69; John F. Richards, “The Economic History of the Lodi Period: 1451-1526,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 8, 1 (1965): 47-67; and Irfan Habib, “Medieval Ayodhya (Awadh), Down to the Mughal Occupation,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 67 (2006-7): 358-382, especially 373-376. For their position in Babur’s period, see Tej Ram, “Babur’s Relations with the Nohani and Farmuli Afghans: A Study of His Nobility (1526-30),” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 41 (1980): 227-238.

⁵¹ “...*sag-i diwana az azurdan divanatar mi gardad*.” *Waqi’at-i Mushtaqi* (Rampur Raza Library, 2002), p. 171.

Clearly, madness was not thrown around as a loose term encompassing a wide spectrum of unconventional, socially unacceptable, deviant behaviors. It was a malady whose diagnoses, symptoms and treatments were closely studied and noted.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how South Asian *bakims* (philosopher-physicians) in the Sultanate and early Mughal periods were deeply invested in explaining the technicalities of witnessing, identifying and curing madness. They tapped into existing knowledge networks to write their own Persian medical manuscripts, which were organized in order of illnesses from head to toe, often beginning with sections on “diseases of the head” (*amraz-i sar*). These texts explicitly mentioned madness as a mental disorder whose emergence could be pinned down to a physical disturbance in the body that also affected the brain. They gave suggestions to track the onset and escalation of insanity, including its allied forms such as melancholia (*malikholiya*), Satanic whisperings (*waswasa*), lycanthropy (*qutrub*), lovesickness (*‘ishq*), derangement (*ikhtilal*), mania (*maniya*), delirium (*huzyan*), hyper-paranoia (*malikholiya-yi maraqi*) and schizophrenia (*sauda-yi tibb’at*). These classifications and sub-types were not watertight, often overlapping and expanding through Unani (Greco-Arabic) and Ayurvedic (Sanskritic) treatises over time. They usually ended the section by prescribing bloodletting as a way to cure madness, along with a combination of drugs, natural and chemical compounds, and other home remedies.

At the same time, I will trace the references to madness in court chronicles, poetry, and occult manuals from the same period. They contain historical anecdotes, literary tropes and paranormal depictions, respectively, which attest to the wide dissemination of medical knowledge about madness, dispelling any misconception that archival genres were separate or compartmentalized. Unani and Ayurvedic medicine did not exist in a vacuum, a theoretical realm of highly specialized knowledge accessible only to a few and removed from popular ontologies of mental illness. Rather, the changing ways in which people observed, comprehended and experienced madness – as spirit possession, as wine intoxication, as religious ecstasy, as excessive love, as political rebellion, and as gendered transgression – were closely tied with scientific advances in the medical tradition. This is not to say that *all* iterations of insanity were necessarily medicalized. My argument here is that in certain cases, there was a direct correlation between the advancing medical acumen about madness and discussions of insanity in non-medical contexts.

This chapter is therefore divided into four sections. Firstly, I will examine the prehistory of mental illness in South Asia by tracing the gradual evolution of medical expertise between the tenth and sixteenth centuries. In the second section, I will offer a close reading of the *Tibb-i Sikandari* (1512), a Lodi-era medical treatise that describes the causes, symptoms and treatments for various kinds of madness based on Persian translations from several Ayurvedic sources in Sanskrit. Thirdly, I will study the changing discourse around insanity and allied mental illness in Indo-Persian Unani texts by Hakim Yusufi and others writing under early Mughal patronage. This medical advancement was combined with discussions of madness, melancholia, lovesickness, mania, hysteria, etc. in contemporary court chronicles, Sufi and Bhakti poetry, and occult manuals in South Asia. And lastly, I will turn to the Deccan as a new center of medical production by the mid-sixteenth century, specifically Ahmednagar, where Jurjani’s *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi* (1547) paved the way for growing scientific acumen about psychological disorders.

To begin with, this conceptualization of insanity built on centuries of Unani and Ayurvedic medical engagement with various humoral theories, pharmaceutical innovations, and an expanding nosology of brain afflictions. While people were aware of insanity as a legitimate category of mental illness in the classical Islamic world, the exact science around how to define madness in both medical and philosophical terms, how to identify its key causes and manifestations, and how to connect it with other diseases of the head like epilepsy (*sar’a*), encephalitis (*sirsam*), migraines (*shaqiqqa*), headaches (*sada’a*), vertigo (*dawar*), oblivion (*nisyan*), apoplexy (*sakta*), cerebral palsy (*falij*), etc., was rudimentary at best. This was a product of close intermingling between the two medical systems – one from Greece and Arabia, the other indigenous to India – contributing to more complex and layered understandings of madness.

Medical Madness Before the Sixteenth Century

The increasing sophistication of medical knowledge about madness can be traced through the history of Unani medicine, which originated in the writings of philosopher-physicians like Hippocrates, Rufus and Galen in ancient Greece. Among the earliest expositions on madness was Rufus of Ephesus' first-century treatise "On Melancholy", which delineated the connections between black bile and melancholia, and outlined a theory for how intellectual genius caused madness. Psychic activity had to be monitored to ensure the health of the mind, and self-discipline was crucial to allay anxiety and prevent an overwhelming display of emotions. Further, Galen gave three classifications of melancholia – cerebral, epigastric and bodily – while describing how mania arose from a loss of reason and memory, pathological excitement, violent impulses and hallucinations.⁵² These ideas of melancholia and mania became popular over the next six centuries in literature and politics throughout the Roman and Byzantine empires.⁵³

Hippocratic and Galenic knowledge was canonized by the Alexandria school and the translation of Greek (Unani) medical texts into Syriac and Arabic, as in the work of Hunayn ibn Ishaq in ninth-century Baghdad. Christian hospitals (*xenodocheia*) continued to be built into the Abbasid period, and Syriac medical texts, especially with their propagation of Galenic knowledge, had a great role to play in the establishment of the Islamic hospital (*bimaristan*). Hospitals could serve several functions: providing medical care, as sanatoriums for recuperation, as homes for the elderly, and imparting medical education.⁵⁴ In rare cases, they were also equipped with mental healthcare wards where mad patients would be confined. One of the first evidences of such a practice comes from Ibn Jubayr's description of an old hospital in Damascus in 1184, where he notes that "for the insane (*majnun*) who are interned, there is a special form of treatment, that is, they are chained in fetters".⁵⁵

The dominance of Syriac Christian medical practitioners till the ninth century was not challenged either by their Zoroastrian or Muslim counterparts; only Indian physicians came close to rivaling their hegemony.⁵⁶ The presence of Indian physicians like Manka, Ibn Dhan (possibly a descendant of the Ayurvedic physician Dhanapati) and Salih in Baghdad is attested by contemporary Arabic sources. Salih is said to have cured Ibrahim, cousin of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 809), of epilepsy, after Gabriel, the caliph's own physician who was well-versed in Unani medicine, failed to revive him. Salih purportedly showed the caliph that Ibrahim had not died by pricking his left thumb, waking him from his deep epileptic slumber. Arab scholars also translated several ancient Indian medical treatises, many of which closely related mental health to astronomy, as in Kanka/ Kakayana's *Kitab al-Qiran* ("Book of Conjunctions"), *Kitab fi al-Tawabbhum* ("Book of Mania or Hysteria"), and *Kitab fi al-Ahdath-i-Alami fi al-Qiran* ("Book on Incidents occurring in the World under certain Conjunctions of Stars"); as also in several other texts on the varying effects of poisons, drugs, intoxication, and the diseases that they caused or helped cure, among them "The Book on the Effect of Mania or Hysteria".⁵⁷

⁵² See William V. Harris (ed.), *Mental Disorders in the Classical World, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition No. 38* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013); Peter E. Pormann (ed.), *Rufus of Ephesus: On Melancholy* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck GmbH and Co. KG, 2008); Jennifer Radden, *The nature of melancholy: from Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵³ Ainsworth O'Brien-Moore, *Madness in Ancient Literature* (R. Wagner Sohn, 1924); Nicolae Gudea and Mihail Zahariade, *Concept of Madness from Homer to Byzantium: Manifestations and Aspects of Mental Illness and Disorder* (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 2016); and Theodor Dimitrov, "In the Times of Madness and Fury: Observations on Collective Behavior and Behavioral Deviations in Byzantium in the Age of Justinianic plague (541–750)", *Архив за средновековна философия и култура*, No. 27 (2021): 71–93.

⁵⁴ Ferngren and Tavakol, "Islam in the Middle Ages," in *Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Ibn Jubayr, *Travels (Rihala)*, 283, 9–16; tr. Broadhurst, *Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, p. 296; quoted in Emilie Savage-Smith and Peter E. Pormann, *Medieval Islamic medicine* (2007), p. 98.

⁵⁶ Dols, *Majnun*, pp. 38–47.

⁵⁷ This incident, along with these texts, is mentioned in Arabic works like *al-Fibrist*, *Tarikh al-Hukama* and *Tabaqat-al-Atibba*. See *Physician-Authors of Greco-Arab Medicine in India* (New Delhi: Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research, 1969), pp. 1–6.

Unani medicine was encoded and canonized in the medieval period through classical Arabic texts like al-Razi's *Kitab al-Hawi fi al-Tibb* ("Comprehensive Book of Medicine", c. 900) and Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* ("Canon of Medicine", 1025), both written in Persia. In the Unani model propounded by al-Razi and Ibn Sina, the health of the body depended on a perfect balance among its four humors: blood (*khun*), black bile (*sauda*), yellow bile (*sifra*) and phlegm (*balgham*). Thus, any illness was caused by an imbalance of humors. In this context, the excess production of *sauda* in the brain was thought to be the leading cause of most mental illnesses, especially madness (which was therefore called *sauday*). Al-Razi (also known as Rhazes) in his *Kitab al-Hawi* noted how hallucinatory madness (*al-waswasa al-saudawi*) was a kind of melancholia (*malikboliya*) that was produced from black bile, which in turn was a result of the combustion of accumulated blood in the brain. This imbalance of humors created a confused state of mind and excited patients, often making them violent and possibly dangerous to people around them.⁵⁸ Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna) in his *al-Qanun* further discussed madness as being closely allied with other mental illnesses like phrenitis (*qaranitis*), lycanthropy (*qutrub*), brain inflammation (*sarsam*), schizophrenia (*sauda-yi tibbi*), depression (*muri-sauda*) and lovesickness (*'ishq*). He was also the first to trace the etiology of brain malfunction to the heart, where he hypothesized that cardiac disease could directly cause cerebral melancholia.⁵⁹ Finally, Ibn Sina classified mania (*maniya*) as a kind of bestial madness (*al-junun as-sabu'i*), and characterized passive male homosexuality (*ubna*) as an incurable mental illness (*'ilat-i nafsani*).⁶⁰

The leading scholar on the subject, Michael Dols, postulates that in addition to the writings of al-Razi and Ibn Sina, madness in the medieval Islamic world was best represented through 'Ishaq bin Imran's *Maqala fi al-Malikboliya* ("Treatise on Melancholia", 908) and al-Majusi's *Kitab al-Malaki* ("The Royal Book", 982). While al-Majusi correlated hot swelling in the stomach with hypochondriac melancholia in the brain and prescribed the venesection of blood that was made impure with the excess production of black bile, Imran defined melancholia as "an illness that can develop into madness in cases of personal loss and separation, severe depression, or mental exhaustion".⁶¹ As Emilie Savage-Smith, Peter Pormann, Franz Rozenthal and Manfred Ullmann have shown, Arabic writings on Unani *tibb* circulated widely in the Persian-speaking world as well.⁶² This paved the way for the first major Persian medical treatise, Zayn al-Din Ismail Jurjani's *Zakhira-yi Khwarizm Shahi* (1111), written under the patronage of the Khwarizm Shahi Sultan Muhammad I of Khurasan in Central Asia. The text was divided into ten volumes, where the sixth volume began with diseases of the head, and described the onset of madness by way of mental confusion and incoherent speech.⁶³

⁵⁸ Mehjabeen Akhter (ed. and trans.), "Ch 3: Melancholia, Melancholic Diets, Foods Contrary to Black Bile, Susceptibility to Melancholia, and Vice-Versa", *Kitab al-Hawi fi al-Tibb (Liber Continens) by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (Rhazes) (865-925 AD), Volume 1: Diseases of the Head* (Hyderabad: Dairatul Ma'arifil Osmania, Osmania Oriental Publications Bureau, 2017), pp. 58-83.

⁵⁹ Yousofpour, et. al., "Role of Heart and its Diseases in the Etiology of Depression according to Avicenna's Point of View and its Comparison with Views of Classic Medicine," *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 6, No. 49 (2015).

⁶⁰ Pormann, "Avicenna on medical practice, epistemology, and the physiology of the inner senses," Peter Adamson (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: critical essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 91-108.

⁶¹ Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World* (Clarendon University Press, 1992), pp. 62-73. See also Ihsan al-Issa, *al-Junun: Mental Illness in the Islamic World* (International Arab Psychological Association, 1999).

⁶² See Savage-Smith and Pormann, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (2007); Rozenthal, *Science and Medicine in Islam* (1990); and Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (1978).

⁶³ Cyrus Abivardi, *Iranian Entomology: An Introduction, Volume 1* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 2001), p. 485; Mohammadali Shoja, et. al. "Esmail Jorjani (1042–1137) and His Descriptions of Trigeminal Neuralgia, Hemifacial Spasm, and Bell's Palsy," *Neurosurgery*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (2010): 431-434; Seyed Fazel Hosseini, et. al., "Hakim Esmail Jorjani (1042–1137 AD): Persian physician and jurist," *Archives of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, Vol. 284, No. 3 (2011): 647-650; and SC Ashtiyani, et. al., "Innovations and discoveries of Jorjani in medicine," *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*, Vol. 2, No. 16 (2009); and Reza Shams Ardekani, et. al., "A Research Conducted on the Life and Works of Hakim Sayyid Esmail Jurjani," *Journal of the International Society for the History of Islamic Medicine*, Vol. 4, No. 7 (2005): 2.

From the thirteenth century onwards, Unani medicine entered India, where there was already a well-established tradition of Ayurveda, a millennia-old medical system preserved through various ancient Sanskrit treatises. Older Eurocentric views that dismiss Ayurvedic medicine as being pre-scientific or unable to differentiate between physical and mental illness have been successfully challenged by scholars like Gananath Obeyesekere. They show how Indian physicians in the Vedic period like Sushruta and Charakha actively laid out the “treatments for epilepsy” (*apasmara chikitsa*) and “treatments for madness” (*unmada chikitsa*). Charakha defined madness (*unmada*) as a state of psychological excitement manifesting in bouts of delirium, uneasiness, rolling of eyes, despondency, irrelevant speech, and a feeling of emptiness in the heart. Sushruta further distinguished madness that arises out of an imbalance among the three Ayurvedic humors (*doshas*) of blood, phlegm and wind, from demonic madness (*amninusha-pratishedha*) which was part of the “science of demonic possession” (*bhutvidya*), one of the eight bodies of Ayurvedic medicine. Indeed, the fourth Veda, the *Atharvaveda*, contains a Sanskrit incantation about how incurring the wrath of Agni, the Hindu god of fire, leads to *rakshasa*-demons invading the body, which could only be treated by the preparation of ritual medicine and the appeasement of gods like Indra and Bhaga.⁶⁴ We must be careful to not dismiss spirit possession as an unscientific superstition or an occult religious belief, since it was closely tied with medical discussions of madness in the Ayurvedic canon. Later Ayurvedic scholars built on the Vedas as well as the contributions of Charakha and Sushruta to devise their own medical prescriptions for madness. Vagbhatta’s *Ashtanga Sangraha* (c. 610), for instance, has a section on the treatments for insanity and epilepsy.⁶⁵

It was in close interaction with this pre-existing indigenous medical tradition that Unani texts began to be commissioned and written in various parts of South Asia. The first was Najmuddin Mahmud Shirazi’s *Ghiyas al-Tibb* (1281), dedicated to Ghiyasuddin Balban, the Sultan of Delhi.⁶⁶ Prominent among other Unani writings was Zia Muhammad Ghaznavi’s *Majmu’a-yi Zia’i* (1327), composed at the court of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in Daulatabad.⁶⁷ Two medical treatises produced for the Muzaffarid rulers of Fars province in Iran, the *Ikhtiyarat-i Badiyi* (1368) by Haji Zain al-Attar and the *Tashrib-i Mansuri* (“Anatomy of Mansur”, c. 1390) by Mansur bin Ilyas, both circulated widely in north India.⁶⁸ An anatomical diagram from the latter manuscript (image below, probably an eighteenth-century copy from Shiraz) portrays a male body with blood circulation through veins, nerves, muscles and organs, all labelled in Persian.

⁶⁴ Obeyesekere, “Ayurveda and Mental Illness,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1970): 292–296. See also Anand Mishra, et. al., “History of psychiatry: An Indian perspective,” *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (2018): 21–26; and S. Haque Nizami and Nishant Goyal, “History of Psychiatry in India,” *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2010): S7–S12.

⁶⁵ Eshan Dabak, “Madness Then, Insanity Now: The Evolution of Madness and Medicine in India from Ancient to Modern Times” (Honors Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2018): 5–35; Amy Louise Hyne-Sutherland, “Speaking of Madness: A Comparative Analysis of Discourses on Pathologized Deviance in Contemporary and Classical India” (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2015).

⁶⁶ Arshad Islam, “Unani methods of cure in the Indian subcontinent: an analytical study,” *International Journal of Engineering and Technology*, Vol. 7, No. 2.29 (2018): 480–487; AA Azmi, *Hindustan mein Tibb-i-Unani ka Aghaz wa Irtiqa* (New Delhi: Aijaz Printing House, 2014); and Azmi, *Tarikh-i-Tibb wa Attiba-yi Daur-i-Mughaliya*. (Delhi: Maktabah Qasmi, 1992).

⁶⁷ Preliminary entry titled “Ziyā’ Muḥammad Mas‘ūd Rašīd Zangī ‘Umar Ġaznawī, *Majmū‘a-yi Ziyā’*,” in Fabrizio Speziale and Carl W. Ernst (eds.), *Perso-Indica: An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions* (2020), available at <http://perso-indica.net/work/medicine/majmua-yi-diya>.

⁶⁸ M.M. Zarshenas, A. Zargar, A. Mehdizadeh and A. Mohagheghzadeh, “Mansur ibn Ilyas (1380–1422 AD): A Persian anatomist and his book of anatomy, *Tashrib-i Mansuri*,” *Journal of Medical Biography*, 24, 1 (2016): 67–71; F. Ramezany and M.R.S. Ardakani, “Ali ibn Hosein Ansari (1330–1404): a Persian pharmacist and his pharmacopoeia, *Ekhtiyarat-i Badi’i*,” *Journal of Medical Biography* 19, 2 (2011): 80–83.

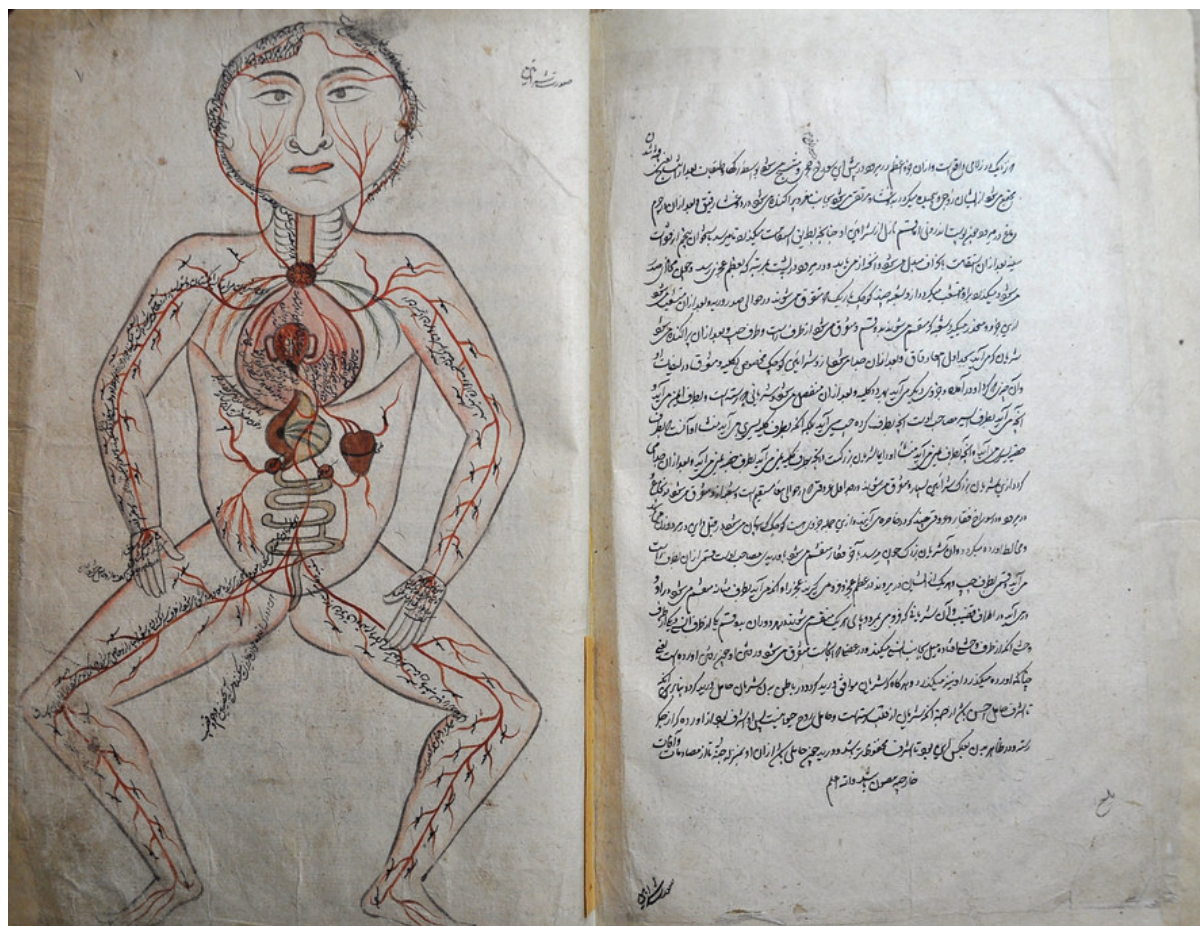


Figure 3. Anatomical diagram from Mansur bin Ilyas's *Tashrib-i Mansuri* (c. 1390)
© Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Closer home, an important contribution was Shah Quli's *Tibb-i Firoz Shahi* ("Medicine of Firoz Shah", c. 1380), patronized by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in Delhi.⁶⁹ It was also during the period of Firoz Shah Tughlaq that the first dedicated hospitals (*bimaristans*) were set up. According to the *Sirat-i Firoz Shahi* (1370), the Sultan ordered that anyone found to be suffering from insanity had to be captured, chained, and made to stay in the nearest hospital. These mental patients needed to be put on an approved diet and given medicaments for ingestion that the Sultan himself had tried and found helpful.⁷⁰ However, this command should not be interpreted as a desire to institutionalize the mad in a proto-asylum-like structure; rather, the emphasis on medical treatment and convalescence suggests that the medieval Indian hospital was a space for the recovery and healing of insane people rather than for their confinement and ostracism.

Fabrizio Speziale has studied how medieval Indian texts juxtaposed the Ayurvedic *tridosha* theory of blood, phlegm and wind with the four Unani humors or *akhlat* of blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile.⁷¹ Perhaps the most remarkable example of Indian physicians grafting Unani onto Ayurveda was Shihab al-Din Nagauri's *Shifa al-Maraz* ("The Healing of Disease", 1388), also known as *Tibb-i Shihabi* ("Medicine of Shihab"), dedicated to Muzaffar

⁶⁹ H.S. Zillurrahman, "Tibb-i Firōz Shāhī by Shāh Qulī," *Studies in History of Medicine and Science*, 10-11 (1986-7): 1-16. I have unfortunately not been able to locate a manuscript copy of this text.

⁷⁰ This is mentioned in chapter four of the *Sirat-i Firoz Shahi*. See R.L. Verma, "The Growth of Greco-Arabian Medicine in Medieval India", *Indian Journal of the History of Science*, 5, 2 (1970): 350-51.

⁷¹ See Speziale, "The Persian translation of the *tridosha*: lexical analogies and conceptual incongruities," *Asiatische Studien-Études Asiatiques*, 68, 3 (2014): 783-796.

Shah I, the Sultan of Gujarat.⁷² As Shireen Hamza shows, Nagauri had studied medicine with Unani *bakims* in Kabul, and with local Ayurvedic yogis in north India.⁷³ In the *Shifa al-Maraz*, Nagauri considered black and yellow bile to be the same humor, identifying the fourth humor with wind. He transfigured the symptoms of excess bile and wind in accordance with the Ayurvedic rather than the Avicennian canon, arguing for instance that an excess of wind, and not black bile, induces sadness (*kamid* or *andub*). Thus, he modified both the Ayurvedic and Avicennian traditions, grafting components of one system onto another to create his own hybrid model. Of particular interest in the *Shifa al-Maraz* is a small verse section on melancholia, where Nagauri discusses its two sub-categories, and also gives various remedies for both:

Ninth Chapter on Melancholia

*I narrate the symptoms of melancholia,
I speak of two kinds of this suffering.
Sorrow and fear and anxiety become abundant,
Idle talk rolls off the tongue.
For a duration the tongue does not refrain from speech,
It runs naked like madpersons.
The other kind is its opposite,
Where [the tongue] remains silent most of the time.
Among people in whom this defect appears,
Know for sure that their brain is confused.
The medicine that is consumed for diarrhoea,
Must also be given for melancholia.
The head of a sheep is useful for the brain,
It can be served with bread for lunch.
Make a paste from poppy and sugar,
It is useful if given at bedtime.
If [the patient] is red in appearance,
Bloodletting from the cephalic vein is useful.
I tell you how to locate the cephalic vein,
It is in line with the finger of the hand.⁷⁴*

باب نهم در ماخولیا
بگویم علامت ماخولیا بدر
دو نوعیت این رنج گویم تر
غم و ترس و فکر فراوان شود
بسی بیپوده بر زبانش رود
زمانی ز گفتن نماند زبان
بر هنه دود همچو دیوانه گان
دیگر نوع بر عکس اینست نشان
که خوموش ماند بعضی کسان
بمردم چو پیدا شود این علل
یقین دان که شود در دماغش خلل
دوای که دوران سر را کند
بماخولیا نیز آتش دهند
مفید است مغزی سر گوسفند
چو تا نهار با نان میدهند
ز خشخاش و شکر حریره کنند
بود نفع گر وقت خفتن دهند
برویش اگر سرخی آید پدید
بود فصد قیفال او را مفید
ترا جای قیفال گویم نشان
برابر تر انگشت دست است آن

This description of melancholia marks a key turning point in medical conceptions of madness and mental illness in medieval South Asia. It indicates attempts to diagnose the symptoms of melancholia (*malikholiya*, spelt here as *makholiya*), which is characterized by either irrational, excessive talking, or by confused silence. This sub-classification hints at a more careful observation of mental patients and their various states of mind. In comparison to the earlier definition of melancholia in Ishaq bin Imran's *Maqala fi al-Malikholiya* in 908 CE, for instance,

⁷² Speziale, "A 14th Century Revision of the Avicennian and Ayurvedic Humoral Pathology: The Hybrid Model by Šihāb al-Dīn Nāgawrī," *Oriens*, 42, 3-4 (2014): 514-532; A.H. Farooqi, "Tibb-i Shahābī: a rare medical treatise of Tughlaq period," *Studies in History of Medicine and Science*, 9 (1985): 35-42.

⁷³ See Hamza, "A Hakim's Tale: A Physician's Reflections from Medieval India," *Asian Medicine: Journal of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2020): 63-82. Hamza's dissertation, "Islam and Medicine in the Medieval Indian Ocean World" (Harvard University, 2023), discusses exchanges in medical knowledge between India and Yemen by focusing on Nagauri's writings.

⁷⁴ I have translated from the copy of *Shifa al-Maraz* at the Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad: Tibb. 145, Acc. No. 1776, ff. 27b-28a. Although it is a medical text, meaning that it should ideally be found in Vol. X: Medicine of the Salar Jung archival catalog, it is instead classified in Vol. IV: Poetry. Medical texts written in verse blur our conventional understanding of distinct archival genres. Acknowledging the overlaps between these genres is critical to working with these unpublished manuscripts. Other copies of the *Shifa al-Maraz* can be found at the Hakim Mohammad Said Central Library, Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi (no. 1828); British Library, London (I.O. Islamic 951); and Wellcome Collection, London (WMS Persian 190).

Nagauri offers a more comprehensive and precise analysis than simply a “madness caused by personal loss and separation, severe depression, or mental exhaustion”.

It is also worth emphasizing that Nagauri’s definition of melancholia is different from our present-day understanding of “melancholy” as clinical depression. In the first case, even though there are connotations of sadness, fright and anxiety (*gham-o-tars-o-fikrat*), the overriding concern seems to be with nonsensical garrulity (*basi-yi bibuda*) – note the poetic way in which the tongue of melancholic patients is described as running naked like madpersons (*barabna dawad hamchu diwanagan*). In the second case, the silence and lack of speech are not born out of dejection or disappointment, but rather because their brain becomes perplexed (*shawad dar dimaghish kbilal*), and it cannot make the connections necessary to produce coherent speech. In both these instances, Nagauri’s melancholia is removed from any modern psychiatric notion of suicidal despondency. Rather, it is much closer in meaning to insanity as a mental illness in Unani and Ayurvedic medicine.

The treatments prescribed for both kinds of melancholia are the head of a sheep (*sar-i gusfand*), making a paste from poppy and sugar (*kebashkebash-o-shakkar*), and bloodletting from the cephalic vein (*fasd-i qaifal*). With the first two medicines, the precise concoction and its dosage were mentioned, along with the time of day when they needed to be administered. Nagauri observes that the sheep-head was appropriate for lunchtime, while the poppy-sugar paste was only effective if given at the time of sleeping. Bloodletting from the cephalic vein, on the other hand, is known variously as venesection and phlebotomy, and has a long history in not just the Unani humoral system, but also in Chinese and European medical cultures. With specific regard to melancholia, epilepsy, encephalitis (*sarsam*) and madness, venesection was necessary because excess blood in the brain affected its powers of reasoning. Everything from lancets to leeches to cups could be applied to drain the excess blood, although the use of cupping therapy (*‘ilaj bil-hijama*) was the most effective in creating suction. While dry cupping did not necessitate bloodletting, cupping with bloodletting (*hijamat bil-shart*) helped ease pressure on the brain and restore a state of humoral equilibrium in the body.⁷⁵ These suggested cures built on previous Unani and Ayurvedic treatments for melancholia, including plants like dodder (*aftimun*), doob or conch grass, branch extracts from the peepul tree (*peepal*), and mixing pomegranate in ghee.⁷⁶

By the fifteenth century, this Indo-Persian medical tradition was well-established in South Asia, as Seema Alavi and others have shown.⁷⁷ The celebrated Chishti Sufi saint Sayyid Bandanawaz Gesudaraz supposedly wrote a treatise on veterinary treatments called the *Nuskha-yi Ghora Choli* (“Prescriptions for Horse Medicine”, 1422), at his hospice (*khanqah*) and later shrine (*dargah*) in Gulbarga.⁷⁸ Further, Ali Muhammad ibn Isma’il Asawali Asili’s *Tibb-i Shifa-yi Mahmud Shahi* (“Medicine for Healing of Mahmud Shah”, 1473) offered a Persian translation of

⁷⁵ Cupping therapy continues to be practiced in modern-day South Asia, e.g., under the aegis of Ministry of AYUSH in India. See Jamal Akhtar and M. Khalid Siddiqui, “Utility of Cupping Therapy (Hijamat) in Unani Medicine,” *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2008): 572-574; and S. M. Abbas Zaidi, S. S. Jameel, Kehkashan Jafri, Shariq A. Khan and Ehsan Ahmad, “*‘Ilaj bil hijamah* (Cupping Therapy) in Unani System of Medicine: Anecdotal Practice to Evidence-Based Therapy,” *Acta medico-historia Adriatica*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2016): 81-94.

⁷⁶ Azma Waseem, et al., “Medicinal Plants Used for Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders in Unani Medicine,” *Acta Scientific Neurology*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (2020): 11-17; A. Balkrishna and L.N. Misra, “Ayurvedic Plants in Brain Disorders: The Herbal Hope,” *Journal of Traditional Medicine & Clinical Naturopathy*, Vol. 6 (2017): 21, Patanjali Research Foundation, Haridwar.

⁷⁷ Seema Alavi, “Ch 1: Indo-Muslim Medicine: Unani in Premodern India,” in *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600-1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 18-53; Mansura Haidar, “Medical Works of the Medieval Period from India and Central Asia,” *Diogenes* 218 (UNESCO 2008): 27-43; D.V. Subba Reddy, “The Origin and Growth of Indigenous Unani Medical Literature in Medieval India,” *Indian Journal of the History of Medicine*, 16, 1 (1969): 20; and *Physician-authors of Greco-Arab medicine in India* (New Delhi: Institute of History of Medicine and Historical Research, 1969).

⁷⁸ On Gesudaraz’s genealogical claims in the Chishti *silsila*, see Pia Maria Malik, “The Sufi Who Was a Sayyid: Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Gesūdārāz’s Assertions of Spiritual Authority,” *Ties of Kinship and Islamicate Societies*, edited by Cecilia Palombo and Birte Kristiansen, in *Medieval Encounters*, Special Issue, Vol. 29, No. 5-6 (2023): 421-441.

Vagbhatta's Sanskrit *Ashtanga Hridaya-sambhita* at the request of Mahmud Begara, the Sultan of Gujarat. Finally, a new center for medical textual production emerged in the Sultanate of Malwa, where Sadullah Nizami Zanjani's *Tajribat al-Mujarrabat-i Ghiyas Shahi* (c. 1480) was dedicated to Muhammad Ghiyas Shah Khalji.⁷⁹

It was also in Mandu, the capital of Malwa, that we learn about Mahmud Mughal Khalji, an ambitious noble at the court of Sultan Hoshang Shah (r. 1406-35). The *Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi* reports that over twelve years, this noble, Mahmud, rose through the ranks and plotted to overthrow the Sultan. To this end, he even had his daughter married to the Sultan. Once, his father caught Mahmud in his bedroom talking to himself about his desire to usurp the throne. The father went in, smacked him on the head, and asked Mahmud if his "brain had become confused" (*kehalal dar dimagh uftada ast*), which can also be interpreted as the onset of madness. Mahmud responded that his father had better not undo his hard work of twelve years and upset the applecart. Despite this, his father went to the Sultan and complained that Mahmud had become "mentally confused" (*kehalal-i dimagh*) in his roguish betrayal (*haramkhorgi*). When the Sultan sent slaves to check on Mahmud, they found him in a dark room with curtains drawn, sick and bedridden. Once they left, Mahmud knew the Sultan would send physicians to verify his condition, so he slaughtered a lamb and drank its blood. The physicians arrived and before they could take the patient's pulse, Mahmud lunged forward to grab a basin and vomited blood in it. The physicians, not realizing that he had vomited the lamb's blood, assumed it was his own. They went back and told the Sultan that his noble had only a few days to live. The Sultan sent his wife, Mahmud's daughter, to meet her father one last time. When she visited him, Mahmud convinced her to poison her husband so that her son, Mahmud's grandson, could ascend the throne. She mixed the poison in Hoshang Shah's food, and he died that night. Then, Mahmud Khalji placed his infant grandson on the throne in 1435, forcing all the nobles and courtiers to accept him as their next ruler. Eventually, Mahmud killed the grandson and declared himself the Sultan of Malwa.⁸⁰

This story about an imperial coup in fifteenth-century central India reflects how the changing medical conception of madness could be appropriated to feign illness, dupe physicians, and achieve one's political ends. When Mahmud's father castigated him for plotting a political rebellion and accused him of mental confusion (*kehalal-i dimagh*), akin to a kind of derangement, Mahmud did not dismiss this allegation. Rather, he took it seriously and deployed it to further his conspiracy against the Sultan of Malwa, Hoshang Shah. Thus, his supposed madness became key to orchestrating his insurrection. He was not only aware that madness was a legitimate mental illness, but he also kept abreast of the existing medical knowledge about various treatments for madness. Mahmud therefore pretended that this affliction had led him to appear ailing and bedridden in a dark room. But he knew this was not enough to convince medical practitioners. One could interpret Mahmud's act of slaughtering the lamb and drinking its blood as his misreading of the prescriptions given in Unani texts like *Shifa al-Maraḥ* about consuming a sheep's head at lunch to cure melancholia. By vomiting the same blood in front of the Sultan's *bakims*, he managed to make them believe that he was on his deathbed. This prevented them from checking his pulse, which would have revealed his healthy state and proven his deception. It can also be argued that Mahmud considered vomiting blood to be a symptom of serious mental illness. All that remained then was to use his ill-health as an excuse to see his daughter and put his plan into action. After he confided in her about his true intentions, she became a cat's paw in his elaborate scheme by poisoning her husband and putting her son on the throne. But in the end, his power-hungry nature led him to kill his own grandson, betray his daughter's

⁷⁹ Ashfaq Ahmad, *Unani Medical Literature produced from 13th Century to 16th century* (Hyderabad: National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Ministry of AYUSH, 2017); Nripendra Kumar Shrivastava, "Indo-Islamic Medical Tradition: A Move Towards Synthesis during the Delhi Sultanate Period," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 72 (2011): 529-538.

⁸⁰ *Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi* (Rampur Reza Library, 2002), pp. 210-12; ed. and trans. IH Siddiqui (1993), pp. 233-5.

trust, and crown himself as the ruler.

Ironically, the same Mahmud Khalji who had faked a bout of madness to orchestrate his son-in-law's murder and his own rise to power, constructed a hospital in Shadiabad (Mandu) in 1445 for better medical care of mental patients, thus creating the first Islamic mental healthcare unit (*timaristan*) in South Asia. This was slightly different from the hospital (*bimaristan*) constructed by Firoz Shah Tughlaq in Delhi sixty years before, since the insane there were not segregated from other patients. Mahmud Khalji also appointed Maulana Fazlullah, who was given the title *Hakim-ul-Hukama* ("Physician among Physicians"), to monitor and institutionalize lunatics in the kingdom of Malwa.⁸¹

We must zoom out here and think about the broader implications for studying the evolving medical discourse of madness through the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. As is clear from the above narrative, melancholia as a bodily ailment and madness as a psychological disorder were already well-established in the period leading up to the formation of the Mughal Empire in 1526. This date is often considered a moment of rupture from the medieval period, therefore becoming the natural starting point for any scholarship on early modern South Asia. However, Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh's pivotal co-edited volume, *After Timur Left*, has argued for the importance of examining the "long fifteenth century" on its own terms, from Timur's invasion of Delhi in 1398 till the second Mughal emperor Humayun's return to India from his exile in Iran in 1555.⁸² Following their lead, my first chapter is invested in understanding the medical, social and political transitions in this crucial formative period, before the advent of the "high Mughal" period, through the lens of insanity and related mental illnesses. The long fifteenth century was a period of great cultural and intellectual ferment, when regional sultanates like Gujarat, Malwa and Delhi patronized Persian medical treatises that drew on both the Unani and Ayurvedic traditions. Madness provides a window into how the two medical systems were not entirely distinct from each other, thus challenging any simplistic notion of Ayurveda as Hindu/Sanskritic knowledge, separate from Unani as Muslim/Persianate medicine. *Hakims* acted as philosopher-physicians in this inter-courtly milieu to articulate an increasingly nuanced scientific conceptualization of severe brain afflictions. At the same time, *bakims* were also courtly nobles, Sufi disciples and accomplished poets, inhabiting a world of intersecting professional identities where they were much more than just medical theorists or doctors. While their networks of social interaction and textual circulation are worth exploring, the scope of my chapter is restricted to tracing a growing medical culture of mental illness in prescriptive manuals as well as its refraction in political and poetic contexts.

Madness in the *Tibb-i Sikandari* (1512)

Around the turn of the sixteenth century, two major medical treatises were commissioned at the court of Sultan Sikandar Lodi in Delhi. The first was Hakim Qasim ibn Qutb ibn Yaqub's *Hikmat-i Sulayman Shabi* ("The Advice of Sulayman Shah", 1497), patronized by Sulaiman Khan Farmuli, the son of Khan-i Khanan Farmuli, the same Khwajagi discussed in the opening anecdote. The text is divided into one hundred and fifteen chapters (*babs*) that discuss various symptoms, diagnoses and treatments for diseases arranged from head to toe.⁸³ The *Hikmat-i Sulayman Shabi* clearly built on Nagauri's *Shifa al-Maraḥ* as it replaced the Unani humor of black bile (*sauda*) with wind (*bad*), an Ayurvedic humor. However, this juxtaposition falls apart in the sixth chapter on madness, melancholia and dizziness (*dauran-i sar*), where excess

⁸¹ R.L. Verma, "The Growth of Greco-Arabian Medicine in Medieval India" (1970): 352.

⁸² Orsini and Sheikh (eds.), *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁸³ Puyan Mahmudian and Stefan Reichmuth, "*Hikmat-i Sulayman-Shahi*," in Fabrizio Speziale and Carl W. Ernst (eds.), *Perso-Indica: An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions* (2020), available at http://www.perso-indica.net/work/hikmat-i_sulayman-sahi.

black bile are again cited as the primary cause for insanity, along with excess yellow bile (*sifra*). Unfortunately, the text does not offer a concrete definition of madness or detail its various symptoms and manifestations. It does, however, prescribe several recipes for treatment. Firstly, it recommends mixing sheep's milk with cow fat and blending them into a paste, which should be applied inside one's nose and rubbed on the forehead till "the ignorance of madness is cleansed" (*jahl rad az diwanagi barad*). Secondly, it suggests massaging the head with a compound of sheep fat, cow fat and camel milk such that "meanness is expunged from goodness" (*pasti rad az niku shawad*). Thirdly, a concoction of oil, ginger, honey, breast milk and sugar should be strained using a hard stone – a quantity of two *dirams* of this paste when applied in the nose helps cure madness, melancholia and dizziness all together. Fourthly, Hakim Qasim advises roasting crushed grain with salt, fresh sugar and horse fat to form lard that must be eaten. The last recipe in this chapter uses the Hindi term *phulera* to denote a flowery perfume that must be combined with pepper in a cooking pot and then consumed to treat dizziness.⁸⁴

I take the second text, Miyan Bhuwa ibn Khawas Khan's *Mad'an us-Shifa-yi Sikandar Shahi* ("The Fount of Healing of Sultan Sikandar", 1512), also known as *Tibb-i Sikandari* ("The Medicine of Sikandar"), as the starting point of my dissertation. It was directly dedicated to Sikandar Lodi. The *Tibb-i Sikandari* was more widely read, as evidenced by the existence of at least ten different manuscript copies (that I know of, but there are probably more)⁸⁵, a lithographed copy printed by the Naval Kishor Press in Lucknow in 1877, and an Urdu translation called the *Mujarrabat-i Tibb-i Sikandari* by Shaikh Muhammad Azimullah in Kanpur in 1902. The *Tibb-i Sikandari*'s original author, Miyan Bhuwa ibn Khawas Khan, was an important noble (*wazir*) at Sikandar Lodi's court in Delhi, though he wrote the text in Agra. The significance of this medical treatise is also recognized in the *Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi*, which mentions how Miyan Bhuwa invited scientists and scholars from all over Central and South Asia, collected books of medicine, and compiled the *Tibb-i Sikandari*. The author of the *Waqi'at* opines: "In India, no book on medicines can equal it in standard. Whoever sees this book realizes its worth."⁸⁶ Miyan Bhuwa claimed to have based the work on a number of ancient Ayurvedic sources including the works of Charakha, Sushruta, Jatukarna, Bhoja, Vagbhatta and Vrind, using the help of local pundits who were presumably more familiar with this tradition. Their influence is evident throughout the text, both in the Sanskrit medical terms used for diseases and in their causes and prescribed treatments.⁸⁷ The *Tibb-i Sikandari* simultaneously juxtaposes this Ayurvedic knowledge with the evolving Unani (Greco-Arabic) concepts elaborated in medical treatises written over the preceding six centuries. This is not stated explicitly by Miyan Bhuwa himself, but I will argue that some of the features of and cures for madness which he discusses definitively betray shades of a Greco-Arabic humoral understanding as both similar to and distinct from a purely Ayurvedic postulation of mental illness.

In discussions of madness and allied mental illnesses, then, the *Tibb-i Sikandari* drew on all its Ayurvedic and Unani predecessors, even as it gave definitive shape to an emerging discourse on the causes, symptoms and treatments for insanity. I will now offer a close reading of "Chapter 20: On a Disease that is a Type of Madness known as Unmad" (*fasl-i bistum: dar marzu nu'hi az diwanagi ke anra unmad giryand*). The term "*unmad*" itself means madness in Sanskrit, and

⁸⁴ *Hikmat-i Sulayman Shahi* (1497), WMS Persian 368, ff. 18a-b, Wellcome Collection, London. Another copy of this text is in the Telangana Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad (Tibb 329).

⁸⁵ These include two copies at the Hakeem Muhammad Said Library, Jamia Hamdard University (no. 2112 and no. 2549), New Delhi; two copies at the Salar Jung Museum and Library, Hyderabad; one copy each at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata; Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (Habibganj Collection, vol. 2, no. 958); British Library, London (Ethe 2305, I.O. Islamic 871); and Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna; and two copies at the Wellcome Library Collection, London.

⁸⁶ I.H. Siddiqui, *Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi* (1993), p. 83.

⁸⁷ Preliminary entry titled "Miyān Bhuwa ibn Hawāṣṣ Ḥān, *Ma'dan al-Sifa'-i Sikandar-Shahi*," in Fabrizio Speziale and Carl W. Ernst (eds.), *Perso-Indica: An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions* (2020), available at http://www.perso-indica.net/work/medicine/madan_al-sifa-i_sikandar-sahi.

its use in a Persian medical treatise indicates Miyan Bhuwa's close engagement with Ayurvedic texts from which he was translating, while at the same time building on the Unani tradition. This chapter occurs in the third section of the text on the symptoms of diseases and their treatments, which Miyan Bhuwa notes were collectively called "Chikitsa" in Hindi (also a term used in Ayurvedic sources). The chapter begins in this way:

The disease of madness (*marṣ-i unmad*) is a fog of declining reason (*ghubar ast aṣ ṣawal-i 'aql*). For the sake of creating an obstruction of corrupted humor (*khilat-i fasid*), it gives rise to internal minds from which special cognitions (*adrakat-i khas*) are changed by one-fifth. It manifests such that from eating acidic and impure food, it seems as though [one has] eaten a dog. It arises due to the consumption of poisonous food, the inauspiciousness of books, the troubles of intellect (*aṣarish-i khatir*), the immensity of sadness and grief (*kasrat-i gham-o-anduh*), and other similar afflictions that change one's appearance or bring it into agitation (*dar iṣṭerab arand*). [It also emerges] from the immensity of delight and happiness, falling from great heights, or engaging in a show of strength such as wrestling with someone who doesn't have the power to resist. The corrupted humor gushes forth and becomes predominant in the mind (*dil*), which is the locus of reason (*'mahal-i aql ast*). Paths which are known as special cognition [enable it] to reach the mind and create an obstruction, leading to the above-mentioned affliction [of madness]. The symptoms of this ailment are that the eyes do not remain in place (*chashmaha bar-ja nabashand*), restlessness (*beqarari*) and strange utterances (*wah-guyi*) manifest, and confusion (*khilal*) seeps into memory and cognition (*hifṣ-o-adrak*). When these signs reduce, we know that the affliction no longer occurs. However, it can occur again soon, and when it is more powerful, we know that the affliction has returned.⁸⁸

This description suggests that insanity was perceived as the loss of reason, which was not defined in philosophical terms but rather in medical parlance as a perfect balance of humors. The humoral balance was upset and corrupted when madness gave rise to a change of one-fifth degree in the powers of comprehension. Madness was also linked to the ingestion of certain foods that were acidic or impure in temperament (*mizaj*). However, aside from eating poisonous food, the six other reasons given for the emergence of madness are not strictly medical. There were no technical parameters for assessing memory lapses, extreme sorrow, agitated appearance, delirious felicity, major disappointment, or bullying. These were highly subjective emotions whose range of manifestations defied any precise scientific demarcation. And yet, they were the primary markers of madness, explained in a Lodi-era medical text that built on previous Ayurvedic and Unani sources. In any case, these factors were responsible for the corrupted humor (*khilat-i fasid*) flooding the brain and causing madness. The symptoms mentioned align with earlier texts like Nagauri's *Shifa al-Marāṣ*, where insanity became apparent either through excessive chatter and laughter or through perplexity and muteness. In addition to these indicators, Miyan Bhuwa considered restless eyes, incoherent speech, and confused thinking to be signs of madness. The illness only abated when these manifestations faded, although they could resurface and cause the patient to relapse.

Where the *Tibb-i Sikandari* breaks from previous medical notions of insanity is in offering an innovate model for classifying different sub-types of melancholia. Miyan Bhuwa lists six categories based on varying causes: one due to the excess of wind (*bad*); second due to the excess of bitter bile (*talkha*); third due to the excess of phlegm (*balgham*); fourth due to excessive production of all three humors; fifth due to grief, sorrow and separation, and accidents of the mind (*'awariṣ-i dil*, where *dil* means mind and not heart) that cause it to become agitated (*dar iṣṭerab arand*); and sixth due to consuming poison (*ṣehar*).

⁸⁸ Miyan Bhuwa ibn Khawas Khan, *Ma'dan-us-Shifa-yi Sikandar Shahi* or *Tibb-i Sikandari* (1512), f. 216b: copy no. 2112 in Hakeem Muhammad Saeed Library, Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi.

We must note how four of these six categories were linked to humoral imbalance in the body, in keeping with the Ayurvedic *tridosha* theory. For the first kind, excessive wind (*bad*) in the brain was caused by eating too little food, getting a severe cold, having a runny stomach from too many laxatives (*musahil*), and severe fasting. As a result, the patient became thin, laughed in places where one shouldn't laugh (*dar mahal-i nakhandidan bekhandad*), danced and sang (*raqs kunad na sarod gnyad*), sobbed, and spoke absurdities (*sukhanan-i behuda gnyad*). Their skin became coarse, and complexion was reddish black. For the second kind, excessive bile (*talkha*) occurred due to pungent items like ginger (*sindhi*) and sour cream (*joghra*), and indigestible foods like fish and vetch (*mahi-o-ma'ash*). The patient of this category of madness was not able to finish any work, was careless (*muhmil beguzarad*), sometimes roamed around naked (*barabna*), sometimes troubled other people, sometimes ran away from them, lied to them, wanted water, cold food, figs, etc., and their complexion turned hot and yellow. For the third kind, excessive phlegm (*balgham*) was produced by consuming foods that took longer to digest (*'asha-yi der-hazm*), such as sweets, etc. The patient remained extremely clean and pious, but did not move much, spoke way too little (*kas-andak*), preferred solitude (*khalwat*), avoided crowds, did not desire food, slept and salivated beyond moderation, and their eyes, nails, urine and feces turned white. Finally, the fourth kind of madness, where all three humors (wind, bile and phlegm) were overflowing in the brain, was the most serious of these afflictions. The patient's mind became restless, and reason and cognition dissipated (*'aql-o-adrak zayil mi gardad*). All the symptoms for the first three types could exhibit to varying degrees in this illness. It was incurable (*laadi*), since any attempt to treat the surplus of one humor was immediately thwarted by the excess of other humors.⁸⁹

This nosology of melancholia hints at a more detailed medical understanding of mental illness in early-sixteenth-century north India. Specifically, we find a growing connection between Ayurvedic humoral imbalance and dietary habits. The stomach and the brain were closely linked to each other, such that the nature and quantity of food consumed directly affected the production of wind, bile or phlegm, and had severe psychological manifestations. Each humoral imbalance was also associated with a particular temperament and pallor, which was a prominent feature of Unani medicine as well. There were therefore subtle differences between the four types of madness. In the first case, excessive wind in the brain was caused by a lack of food and an empty stomach. This led to the patient behaving in a vacuous, uncontrolled and unpredictable manner, while their skin developed a coarse reddish-black hue. Secondly, the consumption of bitter foods caused indigestion and acidity, leading to a build-up of bile that eventually made its way to the head. This caused the patient to become irritable, quarrelsome and deceitful, while the excessive bile made them appear flushed and yellow. Thirdly, eating heavier foods like desserts gave rise to a phlegmatic temperament that made the patient lethargic, brooding, groggy and taciturn. Fourthly, the combination of these three humors overwhelmed the patient's brain to such an extent that they descended into total insanity, senselessness and unreason, without any hope of recovery.

In the fifth type of melancholia, writes Miyan Bhuwa, there was a growing fear of kings, enemies, dervishes, thieves, overwhelming grief, their property being ruined (*halak shudan-i mal*), the death of a loved one, or separation from their beloved (*firaq az mehbubi*) overpowering their mind. The patient blurted out the secrets of their mind, said things that shocked people (*mardan dar ta'jub shavand*), and sometimes laughed, cried or burst into song. This illness seems akin to what we might today consider hyper-paranoia, where the patient becomes delusional, has irrational fears, and their crippling anxieties and insecurities bubble to the surface. There was no specific humoral secretion identified as the principal reason for this kind of madness; rather, it was considered the result of an accident (*'avari*) or deep-rooted psychological trauma. The *Tibb-i Sikandari* continues by observing how the sixth and final type of melancholia was caused by ingesting poison, where the person became thin, their sensory abilities reduced, their eyes turned

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 216b-217a.

red, the color of their body changed, and their face turned black. When the patient of insanity (*sahib-i unmad*) became very weak and incapacitated, they bent their heads in shame (*sar-afkanda manad*) and turned to the sky for help. They could not sleep, and no medicine or drug could help them.⁹⁰

In addition to these six categories, Miyan Bhuwa expounded on a special kind of madness that was associated with demonic possession, which he called *bhut-unmada* or “spirit-madness”. In this form of insanity, the *jinn* seized the mind (*bar dimagh sakht shuda ast*), the patient narrated unseen anecdotes (*bikayat-hayi-ghaib*), was unable to perform tasks that require a lion-like strength (*qudrat-i shir*), and received visions that were beyond their comprehension. Sometimes their madness (*diwanagi*) was temporary – in moments when it became overwhelming, the patient inevitably relapsed and could not transcend it, but eventually the madperson (*diwana*) was able to regain their strength.

Miyan Bhuwa identified nine different kinds of jinns and their varied effects. If a jinn called “*div*” in Hindi (*jinn ke anra be-Hindi div guyand*) possessed the patient, hunger overcame them and they remained pure, but their eyes stayed open and didn’t blink, they spoke incoherently (*sukhan-i be-kalami guyand*) in Hindavi and Sanskrit, they entered the service of Brahmins (*zunnardaran*, literally “the wearers of the sacred thread”), and their existence smelt of unseen flowers. Secondly, if a jinn called “*dinaf*” possessed them, the madperson would not want to eat anything, was not afraid of anyone, became impure, broke their parents’ trust, didn’t follow etiquette, had shrunken eyes, and would sweat profusely. In a third possible scenario, a jinn called “*kand-sarb*” took over and the madperson liked singing, perfumes, and dancing ridiculously (*zabhabak-kunan rags kunad*). Fourthly, when a jinn called “*chbika*” possessed them, their eyes turned red, they adorned their body, and they wanted to wear a narrow red dress. Oblivion (*lisarghis*) clouded their mind and they spoke very little, but they were physically strong and offered to give people whatever they asked for. Fifthly, when they were possessed by “*patar*”, the insane (*diwanagan*) spread out on the floor and had visions of infidels (*kafiran*) christening them with their ancestors’ names and pouring water on them in a kind of baptism ceremony. Yet the possessed did not offend anyone and desired to eat meat, sesame, sugar and milk. In a sixth iteration of jinn possession called “*sarb-gira*”, the madperson crawled on the floor like a snake (*betariq-i mar*), stuck their tongues out, expressed anger, and desired to consume butter, milk, sugar, honey and rice-milk. The seventh was the most severe form of jinn possession, when the demon (*rakshas*) possessed someone. In this instance, the madperson relished meat and alcohol greatly, became shameless, hard-hearted and unkind, went out to murder at night (*dar shab-ha kusht kunad*), remained filthy (*paleed*), and did not eat pure foods. Eighth, when the “*Brahma rakshas*” took over the insane’s body, the patient was hostile to the elderly, read the Vedas of the Brahmins (*baid-i Brahminan bekhwanad*), remained pure, and in doing this work, thought of themselves as Raja Ram. Lastly, when a kind of jinn called “*kashaj*” possessed someone, the madperson kept their clothes away from their body, did not cultivate friendships with anyone, spoke absurdly and hurriedly (*sukhan-i yava wa shitaib guyad*), smelled horrible, remained impure, went into jungles and other deserted places, and sobbed unexpectedly.⁹¹

This description of jinn possession in Ayurvedic texts translated by Miyan Bhuwa for an early-sixteenth-century, Persian-speaking audience in north India has significant religious undertones that need to be unpacked. This is especially apparent in the first, fifth and eighth kinds of jinn possession outlined above. Under the *div*’s influence, the insane entered the service of Brahmins, the highest caste, and spoke incoherent Sanskrit or Hindavi, which was possibly their native tongue. On the other hand, the *patar* led the possessed to hallucinate about conversion rituals where they were being baptized by *kafirs* or infidels, perhaps into Christianity

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 217a-b.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 217b-218a.

or Islam. This shows how Miyan Bhuwa, despite being Muslim himself, perhaps assumed the mental patient to be Hindu, given that he was translating from Ayurvedic texts written by Hindus. The *Brahma-rakshas*, although a demon, was redeemed somewhat by its divine connection with the Hindu god of creation, Brahma. The patient in this case became so religious that they read the four Vedas and had grand visions of themselves as personifications of the god Ram. Moreover, the desire to enumerate categories, whether with the six kinds of melancholia or the nine iterations of jinn, hints at a scientific desire to classify and build on existing knowledge about severe mental illnesses.

However, the science of spirit possession (*bhutvidya*) was by no means unique to the Ayurvedic medical canon derived from Sanskrit texts like the *Susruta-Sambita*.⁹² Indeed, the term that Miyan Bhuwa used to describe spirits – *jinn* – is an Arabic root word that generates the Perso-Arabic word for insanity, *junun*. *Div*, which he mentioned as a “Hindi” word, is as much an etymologically Persian word that is connected to *diwanagi* (madness). Jinn possession also enabled the person to acquire access to an unseen supernatural world. Within a canon of Prophetic medicine (*tibb-i nabawi*), which derived from medical advice outlined in the Islamic Hadith, *hakims* and Sufi saints acted together as religious healers who exorcised the devil (*shaitan*) from the affected person’s body by reciting Quranic verses. By the early Mughal period, we have evidence for dispensaries (*shifakhana*s) in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Aurangabad and Surat, where trained doctors brought elements of Unani and Ayurvedic medicine together with Prophetic and Imamite teachings to treat madness.⁹³

Jinn possession further represents an area of overlap between the medical and occult sciences in early modern South Asia. Emma Platt has recently argued that knowledge of the esoteric sciences (*‘ilm al-ghaib*) was an extremely important courtly skill in the sixteenth-century Deccan Sultanates. She studies the *Nujum al-‘Ulum* (“The Stars of the Sciences”, 1570), a Bijapuri occult treatise, to discuss how spirits, fairies and demons could be summoned and/or exorcised by invoking certain magical spells and incantations.⁹⁴ Writing almost sixty years before this under Lodi patronage in Agra, Miyan Bhuwa’s inclusion of jinn possession in a medical description of madness indicates that a belief in demons, ghosts and spirits was not dismissed as superstitious or irrational, but was rather deeply ingrained in the psyche of scholars and lay people alike in early modern South Asia.

The *Tibb-i Sikandari* then discusses the precise times of the month when each jinn was most likely to possess the person’s brain. While the *div* related to the night of *punyut* (?), the *dinat* seized the person at sunset or midnight, the *kand-sarb* jinn lurked around on the eighth day of the moon-cycle (*ashtmi*), the *chbika* appeared on the twelfth day (*barwa*), and the *patar* attacked on a moonless night (*Amavas*). This marked the complete waning of the moon-cycle, giving rise to the new moon, which reset to the first day of the moon’s waxing. The *rakshas* emerged on the fifth day (*panchmin*), the *Brahma-rakshas* during that night, and the *kasbaj* on the full moon night (*chaudas*).⁹⁵ The close association between the lunar cycle and the probability of jinn possession indicates how the moon was a catalyst for madness and lunacy.⁹⁶ This was certainly the case in the Unani tradition, where moon-attraction gave rise to lycanthropy (*qutrub*), wherein patients

⁹² See Lal, Choudhary and Burdak, “A conceptual study to explore the scientific basis of *Bhutavidya* in the context of *Brihatrayi*,” *World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (2020): 270-278; and Basumatary, Devi, Bhatta and Devi, “A brief mention of *Bhoot Vidya* (Psychotherapy) in *Susruta Sambita* by Acharya Susruta,” *International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (2018): 64-67.

⁹³ See Fabrizio Speziale, “Tradition and Modernization of Islamic Psychiatric Care in the Subcontinent,” IIAS Newsletter, No. 30 (2003).

⁹⁴ See Platt, “Chapter 5: The Esoteric Sciences”, in *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), especially pp. 213, 230-4, 243; Platt, “Spices, Smells and Spells: The Use of Olfactory Substances in the Conjuring of Spirits,” *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2016): 3-21.

⁹⁵ *Tibb-i Sikandari* (Jamia Hamdard No. 2112), f. 218a.

⁹⁶ Incidentally, the term “lunacy” arises from Luna, the ancient Roman goddess of the moon. See Niall McCrae, *The Moon and Madness* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2011).

thought of themselves as werewolves, especially on the night of the full moon, and became susceptible to violence.⁹⁷ In the Ayurvedic canon, too, the thirty lunar phases (*titbis*) were linked with the onset of insanity (*unmada*).⁹⁸

Miyan Bhuwa ends the section on jinn possession by noting that just as the hotness or coldness of certain things became contagious (*sarayat*), such as when the heat of the sun was trapped in crystal (*buluri*) and circulated through the soul, the body and its surroundings, so too did the jinn enter the person's existence and spread through their environs. And yet, no one was any the wiser. When oblivion became apparent in the madperson, they started foaming at the mouth (*kaf az dabanish birun mi aayad*), slept a lot, suddenly fell to the ground, and shook uncontrollably (*sakht belarzad*). People felt scared seeing their big, frightening eyes (*chashma-hayi buzurg-o-tarsnak*). The possessed person was intimidated by the height of trees and elephants and city-walls, worried that they would fall on them. This kind of madness was not curable until a period of thirteen years had passed.⁹⁹ This description highlights the insidious nature of jinn possession, which caught the person unawares and rendered them incapable of controlling their actions. The physical manifestation of a swooning fit or seizure hints at a possible connection between epilepsy and madness. These connections between epilepsy and insanity are also evident later in the text. After the chapter on madness, Chapter 21 of the *Tibb-i Sikandari* discusses a mental illness named "the wind of epilepsy" (*bad-i sar'a*), which was called "*apasmara*" or "*mrig*" in Sanskrit. The power of the face was beset with delusions (*qunwat-i rukh ra wahm bish bashad*), and the patient was unable to perform actions that required physical strength.¹⁰⁰ Thus, for Miyan Bhuwa, although epilepsy was diagnosed as a separate mental illness, it shared some overlaps with madness.

Madness in the early Mughal period (1518-37)

The *Tibb-i Sikandari* foreshadowed a massive spike in Persian medical manuscripts produced in South Asia. The most important *bakim* of the 1520s and 30s was an Iranian émigré from Herat, Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Haravi, also known as Yusuf Khurasani or Yusufi (1467-1542). He started writing *tibbi* manuals a few years before the start of the Mughal Empire, going on to become the royal physician of the emperors Babur and Humayun. In addition, he was a lexicographer, accomplished poet, Sufi mystic and letter-writer. Ali Anooshahr's recent study of Yusufi's epistolary exchanges in the *Badayi' al-Insha* gives us an insight into north Indian courtly culture in the early years of imperium.¹⁰¹ In some ways, Yusufi's scholarship represents the continued production of medical texts in the period before and after 1526, when patronage centers may have shifted, but madness and allied mental illnesses continued to be described through a combination of Ayurvedic and Unani knowledge. In this section, I will trace the scientific depictions of insanity in Yusufi's writings, coupled with other Unani manuscripts of the time. Simultaneously, as we move into the early Mughal period, I will attempt to synthesize these

⁹⁷ It was discussed in the writings of al-Razi and Ibn Sina, for instance. See Michael Dols, "Chapter 4: Medical Madness" in *Majnun: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World* (1992), pp. 62-103.

⁹⁸ See Mitchell Gralnick Weiss, "Critical Study of 'Unmada' in the Early Sanskrit Medical Literature: An Analysis of Ayurvedic Psychiatry with reference to Present-Day Diagnostic Concepts" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1977); and K.P. Unnikrishnan, "Unmada (Insanity)," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1964): 29-32.

⁹⁹ *Tibb-i Sikandari* (Jamia Hamdard No. 2112), f. 218a.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 223a.

¹⁰¹ See Anooshahr, "Letter-Writing and Emotional Communities in Early Mughal India: A Note on the *Badayi' al-Insha*," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2021): 1-15. For more on Yusufi's life and writings, see Walter Hakala, "On Equal Terms: The Equivocal Origins of an Early Mughal Indo-Persian Vocabulary," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (2015): 209-27; and Muhammad Taiyab, "A Critical Evaluation of the Works of Yusuf bin Muhammad Yusufi" (PhD dissertation, Aligarh Muslim University, 1970).

medical advances with references to madness in contemporary court chronicles, poetry, and occult manuals.

Yusufi's father, Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Haravi, had also been a famous *bakim* at the Timurid court of Sultan Husain Bayqara (r. 1469-1506) in Herat. He wrote an Arabic medical lexicon called *Bahr al-Jawahir fi Tahqiq al-Mustalibah al-Tibbiya* ("The Sea of Jewels in the Precision of Medical Terms"), completed in 1518. It is an alphabetically arranged dictionary of anatomical concepts, pharmacological substances, and illnesses both physical and mental. Haravi based this text on his reading of earlier Unani medical treatises by Ibn Sina, al-Razi and others.¹⁰² I have accessed a copy of this manuscript at the National Archives in New Delhi, which is titled *Bahr al-Jawahir fi Loghat al-Sa'er* ("The Sea of Jewels in the Dictionary of Words"),¹⁰³ where some sections are in Persian. For instance, a definition of "*junun-i siba'*" (literally meaning ferocious or violent insanity) states that this was synonymous with mania (*maniya*) and rabies (*da' ul-kalb*), both of which are among the various categories of madness (*diwanagi*). It ends with the popular saying, "madness is of many kinds" (*al-junun funun*).¹⁰⁴ In the section beginning with the letter *mim*, the terms melancholia (*al-malikholiya*), schizophrenia (*al-malikholiya al-miraqi*), and mania (*al-maniya*) are also defined in Arabic.¹⁰⁵ The different classifications of madness were clearly well-known enough for Haravi to explain them in a medical dictionary of this kind, which circulated across Safavid Iran, Central Asia, and South Asia.

By 1521, Haravi's son, Yusufi, had become a *bakim* in his own right, and wrote his first medical treatise, the *Jami' al-Fawa'id* ("Compendium of Benefits"), also known as the *Tibb-i Yusufi* ("Yusufi's Medicine"). At first glance, it is a formulaic Unani manuscript delineating various diseases of the body, starting with the head. When compared with the *Tibb-i Sikandari*, which was based on Ayurvedic sources and focused primarily on melancholia and epilepsy as the two main ailments of the brain, the *Jami' al-Fawa'id* describes as many as twenty different mental illnesses, including headaches (*sada'a*) of four kinds (caused by yellow bile or *sifra*, phlegm or *balgham*, black bile or *sanda*, and the hot sun and cold wind), migraines (*shaqiqa*), encephalitis (*sarsam*), forgetfulness (*nisyan*), foolishness and stupidity (*hamq-o-ra'umat*), rigidity (*jumud*), lethargy (*sabat*), insomnia (*bekhwabi*), stupefaction (*sadr*), vertigo (*dawar*), epilepsy (*sara'*), apoplexy (*sakta*), nightmares (*kabus*), numbness (*khadr*), cerebral palsy (*fali*), paralysis (*laqwa*), nictitation (*ikhtilaj*), and convulsions (*tishnaj*).¹⁰⁶ This widening nosology of psychological disorders is testament to the progress in early-sixteenth century Persianate medicine that built on previous epistemic networks.

Two mental illnesses discussed in the *Jami' al-Fawa'id* are especially important here. The first of these was insanity or madness (*junun ya'ni diwanagi*), where Yusufi observed that whoever fell into the abyss of madness (*varta-yi diwanagi*) had to be immediately given a purgative for their black bile (*musabil-i sanda-yish*), or something to adjust the humoral balance, or something that removed sorrow from their heart and made them happy. An exhilarating adjustment was to a cold temperament like incense and dust (*'aud-o-ghabr*), and to a hot temperament like sandalwood

¹⁰² Copies of this text can be found in the Wellcome Collection (London), Bodleian Library (Oxford), Jamia Hamdard (Delhi), Salar Jung Museum (Hyderabad), and National Library of Medicine (Bethesda, MD). For the NLM entry on this text, see <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/mon10.html>.

¹⁰³ No. 80, Acc. No. 604, Oriental Records Division, National Archives of India.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 115.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 320-1.

مالخوليا: هذا لفظ يوناني بعد اللام الاول نون و قيل بعد ياء قال از شيخ انما يقال مالخوليا لما كان حدوثه عن سوداي غير مخرقه و هو تعبير الظنون الفكر عن الميرئ الطبيعى الو الفساد الخوف لمزاج سودا وى يو حش الروح و بفرعه نبطلمته لا يؤدى احد ابخلاف الجنون السبعى. **المالخوليا المراقى:** هو ان يكون المالخوليا بشركه المراق. **مانيا:** هو الجنون السبعى بحسب اللغة/لغت اليونانية هو اعم من دائ الكلت لكن الاطبيباى حضصوا دائ الكلت بالجنون السبعى الذى يكون مع واستعطاف و صحك كما ذكر دما سواه بالاسم العامر و هو المانيا فالمانيا بحسب النقة عامر لدائ الكلت و لغيره من الجنون السبعى و حسب الاصطلاح اسم لعذا النوع الميائن لدائ الكلت.

¹⁰⁶ *Jami' al-Fawa'id* or *Tibb-i Yusufi* (Tibb. 62, Acc. No. 1692, Persian Manuscripts Section, Salar Jung Museum and Library, Hyderabad), ff. 2b-19a. A copy of it in the library at Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, and as many as 29 copies of this manuscript in the Wellcome Collection Library, London.

and camphor (*sandal-o-kafur*). He then stated the treatments for insanity (*'ilaj-i junun*) in the form of two quatrains (*rubā'is*):

*In every body from which rationality emanated,
The effects and symptoms of insanity were evident.
All their eyes were on the beautiful faces of idols,
All their ears on the sound of war, flute and lute.
Since black bile increased in your body,
Your madness emerged due to that cause.
You must abstain from (drinking) red wine,
From it flows (madness), like smoke from fire.*¹⁰⁷

هر تن که ازو بدیده عقل نمود،
اثر و علامات جنون باید بود،
چشمش همه بر صورت زیبای بتان،
گوشش همه بر صدای جنگ و نی و عود.
چون در بدن تو سودا افزود،
دیوانگیت از آن سبب روی نمود،
باید که مداومت کنی بر می لعل،
کز وی رود چو از آتش دود.

As in Nagauri's *Shifa al-Maraḥ* written over a century before this in Gujarat, we find here a verse-description of madness. However, unlike the *Shifa al-Maraḥ* and other medical texts, the *Jamī' al-Fawa'id* takes a poetic turn that is not strictly scientific with this inclusion of two *rubā'is* that depict a sensory experience of madness. Even before the poetry, Yusufi compares a suitable medicament for restoring humoral balance and a moderate temperament with the fragrance of incense, dust, sandalwood and camphor. These olfactory analogies are coupled with visual images of idolatry, harking back to the Hindu references in the *Tibb-i Sikandari* and suggesting that the madperson was assumed to be Muslim. It is also possible that for Yusufi, such hallucinations that bordered on infidelity stemmed from the medical disease of insanity. The same delusions perhaps led mental patients to imagine auditory stimuli ranging from battle cries to instrumental music. Finally, red wine is highlighted as a catalyst for not just intoxication but also excessive black bile and therefore madness. The prescribed remedy is to stay away from consuming red wine, which is similar to the fire that causes smoke. The fire-smoke metaphor is evocative of demonic possession in the Ayurvedic tradition, hinting at continued crossovers and parallels between the two medical systems.

The relationship between drinking, intoxication, and madness is also worth considering in contemporary non-medical contexts. Around the same time that Yusufi was writing the *Jamī' al-Fawa'id* in Herat, the first Mughal emperor Babur threw a party when his son Hindal was born in Kabul in 1519. Babur invited a number of his nobles, where they also smoked cannabis (*ma'jun*) and drank Levantine spirits (*'araq*). This was clearly a bad idea, and he notes retrospectively that a *ma'jun* party never goes well with an *'araq* party. One Tardi Khan got very inebriated, and having gotten drunk to the point of negligence (*mast-la-yi-ghafl*, which Beveridge translates as “mad-drunk”), proceeded to upset the convivial atmosphere by engaging in much vulgarity (*shalayini-ba-yi bisyar*) and tasteless chatter (*sobbat-i bi-mazḥa*), causing the party to come to an end.¹⁰⁸ Babur experimented with set poetic meters and lyrical forms in his autobiography, the *Tuzḳ-i Baburi* or *Baburnama*, often under the influence of alcohol. For example, he wrote:

*Ramadan came and I became a pious wine-sot,
Eid arrived and with it the remembrance of wine.
Neither fasting nor prayer [but] years, months,
Nights and days with wine and ma'jun, crazy and drunk.*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 13a-b.

¹⁰⁸ Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, *Baburnama: Memories of Babur*, translated by Annette Beveridge (London: Luzac and Co., 1922), p. 386. For the Persian translation commissioned by Akbar, see Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan, *Vaqi'at-i Baburi* (1593), Mss. Or. 3714, British Library (London), f. 312b.

¹⁰⁹ Translated from Chaghatai Turki by Stephen Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises: Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India, 1483-1530* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 282.

Here, too, as with the *Jami' al-Fawa'id*, religion plays an important role in betokening the extent of intoxication. Babur writes that he became a wine addict (*bada-parast*) in the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims are supposed to be fasting. Whether it was in this period of abstinence or of celebration during the festival of Eid, his love for wine did not diminish. The conjoined nature of being crazy and drunk (*divana-o-mast*) suggests that insanity and alcoholism were intricately linked. We cannot be sure if Babur had read Yusufi's early work at this stage, although Yusufi did become his court physician after 1526 in Agra. But even in 1519, the exchange of literary and scientific ideas between Kabul and Herat would have facilitated the medico-poetic depictions of madness and inebriation which both Babur and Yusufi penned in their respective capacities as prince and *hakim*.

The second mental illness that Yusufi described in the *Jami' al-Fawa'id* was lovesickness (*'ishq*). He wrote that it was an ailment of Satanic whisperings (*waswasa*), similar to melancholia (*makholiya*) in that it appeared among libertine, jobless people (*mardum-i lund-i bekar*) from the excess of youthful humors (*kasrat-i ikhtilat be-javanan*) and the thought of beauty and virtue (*fikr dar husn-o-shama'il*). Its symptoms included yellowness of complexion, dryness of mouth, insomnia, crying (*giriya*), sighing (*aah*), and an erratic pulse (*ikhtilaf-i nabz*) especially when the patient saw the beloved (*ma'shuq*) or heard their name. This is followed by a *ruba'i*:

Everyone who is on the path of being a true lover,
Becomes truthful in the ways and manners of a lover.
With a skilled doctor lies the cure (for this illness),
Union (with the beloved) is the agreeable treatment.¹¹⁰

هر کس که براه صدق عاشق باشد،
در طور طریق عاشق صادق باشد.
نزدیک طبیب حادق آن شفیه را،
وصلت علجی که موافق باشد.

While the term used for love and lovesickness is the same (*'ishq*), in a medical sense it was a form of madness that was closely allied with melancholia and delirium. Separation from the beloved led to physical manifestations in the lover, which were visible signs of their distress and yearning for true love. Yusufi continued that if the path to union with the beloved was not available, the patient had to be told such passionate, indecent rants about love (*aẓ ma'shaq sukhānan-i ẓist-o-napasandida*) that the lover gradually became averse. Another remedy was to imprison the patient (*muqa'id saẓand*) and make them engage in sexual intercourse and copulation without love (*mubashirat wa mujami'at mazil-i 'ishq*) and thus prevent them from thinking about their beloved. Since the domain of perception (*ahl-i adrak*) gave rise to this ailment of lovesickness, the people around the patient had to make them look at their beautiful face in a mirror and observe that it looked burdensome, to the extent that it could not be recognized in a crowd of people. While lovesickness is a longstanding metaphor for unrequited love in classical Persian literature, most famously in Nizami Ganjavi's *Layla-wa-Majnun* (1188),¹¹¹ it was reflected in Yusufi's own time as a quasi-medical condition.

In a revealing moment in the *Baburnama*, Babur expressed his infatuation with a young boy, Baburi, whom he met in a bazaar in Andijan in 1500. Babur claims he had no experience of being in love before this, and his desire for Baburi led him to compose Persian couplets. Whenever Baburi appeared before him, Babur was unable to look him in the eye due to his shame and embarrassment (*aẓ jabat-i haya-o-hijat*). Even when Baburi was not around, Babur would be agitated and flustered.

¹¹⁰ *Jami' al-Fawa'id* or *Tibb-i Yusufi*, f. 13b.

¹¹¹ The connections between love, madness and poetry are epitomized in the figure of the Majnun (literally meaning "madman"). One of the most widely cited legends from the Perso-Arabic literary canon, the story of the Bedouin poet Qays and his lover Layla was first penned by the twelfth-century poet Nizami Ganjavi. It parallels legendary love-stories like *Shirin-Farhad*, *Yusuf-Zulaikha*, *Heer-Ranjha*, and others. The trope of Majnun popularized certain Sufi motifs, and in South Asia, the most popular rendition was Amir Khusrau Dihlavi's *Majnun-o-Layli* (1299). See As'ad E Khairallah, *Love, Madness and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Majnun Legend* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1980).

From the overflow of love and passion and the excess of youth, I used to wander bare-head and barefoot through streets, gardens and orchards. I was polite to neither friend nor stranger, careless with myself and others. The lover roams senseless and insane, thinking of the fairy-face. Sometimes like the madmen, I went alone through moors and plains; sometimes I took to scouring gardens and houses lane by lane.¹¹²

There is no indication here of what people around Babur thought of his attraction to Baburi, or whether his behavior was considered absurd or outside the pale by anyone for being homosexual. Homoeroticism was a poetic trope that Babur frequently employed, much like his contemporaries and earlier Persian poets¹¹³; indeed, there are several references to pederasty and catamites (*kandus* or *gandus*) throughout the text. But the effect of this relationship on Babur himself is evident, making him wander aimlessly “like the madmen” (*misl-i diwana-ha*). This also reflects Babur’s awareness of who in his society were considered madmen, and the specific actions and proclivities attributed to them that led them to be categorized as patients of lovesickness. As Stephen Dale observes, Babur’s psychological tumult in his lovesickness for Baburi was intimately tied to his poetry.¹¹⁴

In thinking about lovesickness, we must also factor in the religious articulations of desiring union with God in both the Bhakti and Sufi pantheons. Devotees wrote about the anguish of separation from their divine lover, especially in the *virahini* trope in medieval Bhakti poetry in Braj and other languages.¹¹⁵ The poetry of the Rajput princess Mirabai (1498-1547), for instance, expressed her love-madness for Krishna even though she was already married to Bhoj Raj Sisodia, the ruler of Chittor:

*I am dyed in the dark one’s hue, Rana, I am dyed in the dark one’s hue
Beating the drum to keep time, I danced before the sadhus.
People thought me mad with love, crazed for love of the dark one.
Rana sent me a cup of poison, I swallowed it without a thought.
Mira’s god, the lifter of mountains, remains true life after life (36)
... Because of you, beautiful dark one, all the people laugh.
Some say Mira is mad, some say she is a destroyer of family,
Some say she has lit a lamp and is immersed in the beloved’s name (240).*¹¹⁶

Viraha-bhakti as a genre is about the fire of longing for the separated lover that leads to

¹¹² “*Az tughyan-i ‘ishq-o-muhabbat wa ghalban-i javani, sar-barahna wa pa-barahna dar kucha-o-bagh-o-baghicha sair mikardam. Na iltifat-i ashna-o-sika, wa bi-parvahi-yi kbud wa ghair mikardam. A’ashiq on na’aj bikbud-o-divana, kim-i pari rukhsara. Gahi misl-i diwana-ha tanha be pusht-o-dasht miraftam, gahi baghat-o-mahalat ra kucha-be-kucha mi chustam.*” See Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan, *Vaqi’at-i Baburi* (1593), Mss. Or. 3714, British Library (London), ff. 96b-97a. Translation mine.

¹¹³ For more on homoeroticism in Indo-Persian literature, see Walter Penrose, “Colliding Cultures: Masculinity and Homoeroticism in Mughal and Early Colonial South Asia”, in Katherine O’Donnell and Michael O’Rourke (eds.), *Queer Masculinities, 1550-1800: Siting same-sex desire in the early modern world* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 144-165; Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai (eds.), *Queering India: Same-sex Love and Eroticism in Indian Culture and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); and Vanita and Kidwai (eds.), *Same-Sex Love in India: Readings from Literature and History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

¹¹⁴ Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises* (2004), pp. 107-110.

¹¹⁵ For a detailed study of *viraha*-bhakti in classical Sanskrit and Tamil poetry, see Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa-Devotion in South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). I thank Sohini Sarah Pillai for referring me to the scholarship on *viraha*-bhakti.

¹¹⁶ S.M. Pandey and Norman H. Zide (trans.), *Poems from Mirabai* (unpublished mimeo, University of Chicago, 1964); cited in Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, “Poison to Nectar: The Life and Work of Mirabai,” *Manushi*, No. 50-52 (1989): 75-92. See also John Stratton Hawley, “Mirabai as Wife and Yogi,” in *Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 117-138.

madness, and was closely tied with *barahmasa* literature (songs about twelve months).¹¹⁷ Throughout the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, it was popular among *nirguna* poets like Kabir, who adopted a female voice to empathize with the pain of the *virahini*,¹¹⁸ as well as their Vaishnava counterparts like Surdas and Tulsidas. In Surdas's poetry, there was also an explicit reference to moon-attraction, where Hari (Krishna)'s lunar face was invoked by *gopis* like Radha. The moon's usually cooling effect was lost, making the *virahini* want to set herself on fire to satiate her burning desire for Krishna.¹¹⁹ We must be cognizant of the shared Perso-Hindavi (*bhasha*) ethos of Mughal India, where the *virahini* trope also recurred in Avadhi Sufi romances (*premakhyans*) like *Chandayan*, *Padmavat*, and especially *Madhumalati*, in which the *virahini* was the neglected wife pining for her husband.¹²⁰ By the high Mughal period, the *virahini* trope manifested through the common Indic-Persianate metaphors of erotic sentiment (*sringar-rasa*) and lovesickness (*'ishq*), becoming a source of pleasure and spiritual instruction for Mughal noblemen.¹²¹ While there are no explicit medical references to symptoms or cures for lovesickness, medieval Bhakti poetry contains an implicit knowledge of the lover's mental state that was not simply a social or religious construct, but rather a physiological illness with bodily manifestations.¹²²

Coming back to the dissemination of Persianate medical knowledge, madness was discussed in another Unani treatise produced in Central Asia, this time under Uzbek patronage. A Persian *hakim*, Sultan Ali Tabib Khurasani, wrote the *Dastur al-'Ilaj* ("Rules for Treatment") in Samarqand in 1526 at the behest of the Shaybanid ruler Abu al-Muzaffar Mahmud Shah Sultan (r. 1512-31). The *Dastur al-'Ilaj* was a therapeutic manual on maintaining the general health of the body, and became popular in Mughal India.¹²³ The first chapter (*bab*) of its first section (*maqala*) is on diseases of the head (*amraz-i sar*). Of particular interest for us are the seventh and eighth mental illnesses in this chapter, melancholia (*malikholiya*) and insanity (*junun*). Khurasani defined melancholia as a disease where cognition changed and suspicion festered, but the corruption, fear and meaning of melancholia in Unani medicine was the humor of black bile, especially thrombotic or plethoric black bile (*sanda-yi damavi*). From this imbalance, the patient became a permanent resident of contemplation, sadness and wildness, engendering their hatred of the world and of love, leading them to desert their friends. Its symptoms encompassed confusion of the mind (*ikhtilat-i zahan*), laughter, redness of face and eyes, and swelling of the pulse (*'azam-i nabz*), which can also be understood as ossification of the artery. As treatment, Khurasani recommended bloodletting or venesection, and, if the patient had reached maturity, cupping (*hijamat*) in the foreleg or between the two shoulders or the frontal/ forehead vein (*rag-i pishani*). After this, the text suggests administering a concoction of violet sherbet, poppy syrup, pomegranate water, and sherbet of dodder (*afsimun*).¹²⁴ These variegated cures reflect an innovative

¹¹⁷ See Prem Kumari Srivastava, "Separation and Longing in Viraha Barahmasa," *The Delhi University Journal of the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, No. 3 (2016): 43-56.

¹¹⁸ See Galina Rousseva-Sokolova, "Female Voices and Gender Construction in North Indian Sant Poetry," in *Early Modern India: Literatures and Images, Texts and Languages*, eds. Maya Burger and Nadia Cattoni (CrossAsia-eBooks, Hiedelberg University Library, 2019), pp. 191-203.

¹¹⁹ Hawley, *The Memory of Love: Surdas sings to Krishna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 212, 228-231, 233, 243.

¹²⁰ Aditya Behl (ed. Wendy Doniger), *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 65, 82, 105, 118, 170, 273-4.

¹²¹ See Katherine Butler Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions: The Mughal *Rasika*," in *Tellings and Texts* (2015), pp. 407-423; Shantanu Phukan, "'Through Throats Where Many Rivers Meet': The Ecology of Hindi in the World of Persian," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 38, 1 (2001): 33-58; and Phukan, "'None Mad as a Hindu Woman': Contesting Communal Readings of *Padmavat*," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 16, 1 (1996): 41-54.

¹²² See Sisirkumar Das, *The Mad Lover: Essays on Medieval Indian Poetry* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1984).

¹²³ This is indicated by how the *Dastur al-'Ilaj* was later translated into Urdu by Hakim Muhammad Hadi Hussain and published by the Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow in 1912. Copies of this manuscript are housed in Jamia Hamdard (New Delhi); The Asiatic Society (Kolkata), G57, no. 1545; Wellcome Collection (London), no. 56; British Library (London), I.O. Islamic 404; and Salar Jung Museum (Hyderabad).

¹²⁴ *Dastur al-'Ilaj* (1526), Hakeem Said Central Library, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, no. 1861, f. 107a.

approach that blended previous Unani and Ayurvedic prescriptions in not just Ibn Sina and al-Razi's canonical writings, but also in Indian texts like the *Shifa al-Maraḏ* and *Tibb-i Sikandari*.

The section on insanity (*junun*) in the *Dastur al-Ilaj* mentions two sub-types, mania and rabies. Mania, which when translated into Unani terminology (*tarjuma be-lughat-i Unani*) meant “violent insanity” (*junun-i siba'i*), was characterized by anger (*ʿaḏb*), agitation (*iḏṭerab*) and palpitation (*barjastan*). The connection with Yusuf al-Haravi's *Bahr al-Jawahir* is immediately apparent, as he too defined mania as violent insanity. But Khurasani went a step further in giving a detailed explanation of mania and various recipes for its treatment:

This kind of madness is permanent in its tumult, occurring due to vigorous yellow bile or from the burnt humor of black bile. Its symptoms include insomnia, sorrow, confusion of reason, gazing audaciously, bodily fatigue, and being pensive. [The patient remains] silent for long stretches of time, but when they do open their mouths, they speak so much that they cannot be pacified. The cure for mania is venesection, extracting the corrupted blood little by little, cooling and moistening the temperament by consuming barley-water or almond oil, or cooking a corpulent chicken with pumpkin, wild spinach and coriander. If available, make a mixture of coriander seeds, pulses, peeled vetch, mutton from a young sheep, a broth of pomegranate extract, Indian tamarind juice, and juice from unripe grapes. If the patient is constipated, make a sherbet of Indian tamarind juice, plum and water lily paste, and give it to them as a purgative whenever their nature starts to get sluggish.¹²⁵

This description of mania offers a window into advancing medical acumen about mental illness. Where the *Tibb-i Sikandari* had merely gestured to six kinds of insanity, here mania is clearly identified as a particular branch of madness that differed from its other iterations. Moreover, the *Shifa al-Maraḏ* had explained how madness can result in either a lack or excess of speech, but for Khurasani, mania represented an intermediate category where the patient could go from prolonged silences to hysterical ramblings in a matter of minutes. The various concoctions of meats, plant extracts and fruit juices also suggest a widening range of culinary and pharmaceutical remedies in keeping with the varied humoral temperaments and digestive behaviors of the patient's body.

Khurasani explicated the second kind of madness, rabies (*da' ul-kalb*), as emerging when an animal bite was burnt, leading to fits of rage mixed with salivation (*mukhillat be-la'eb*), moments of gentleness, and boasting to others, which was customary among those with hydrophobia (*kalb*). Its prescribed treatments included bloodletting, drinking fresh, cold sherbets, taking purgatives several times a day, rubbing oil in the nose, and eating a dish made of pumpkin oil (*roghan-i kadu*), boiled sheep-feet (*pacha*), cucumber (*badrang*), water and apples. Flowing water and greenery were also mentioned as being beneficial.¹²⁶ Rabies was therefore identified as a distinct sub-category of insanity different from melancholia, jinn possession, mania or lovesickness. That Khurasani went into such detail explaining its causes, symptoms, and remedies suggests how this developing scientific discourse was carefully parsing out the differences between various classifications of madness while acknowledging the overlaps between them. For instance, rabies was not caused by the burning of black or yellow bile, but rather by an animal bite. Anger was a symptom of mania as well, but the excess of saliva, haughty

¹²⁵ “Ein nuḥ-i junun dayim dar shorish ast wa budus-i ein aḏ sifra-yi shadid wa aḏ kḥilat-i sanda-yi suḳhta mi shawad. ‘Alamat-i ou beḳhwabi wa ranj wa iḳhtilat-i ‘aql wa be-jurrat nigah kardan wa ḏa’ifi-yi badan wa mutafikar budan wa suḳut-i muddat budan [ast]. Wa agar suḳhan bar ou mukarrar saḏand, aan miqdar guyad ki ou ra taskin tawan dad. [Dar] ‘ilaj-i maniya fasd numayand wa kḥun-i fasid be-ḥand dafa andak andak bardarand, wa tabrid-o-tartib-i mizaj be kḥurdan-i ab-i she’ir ya roghan-i badam ya murgh-i farba badan be-jushanand ba kaddu wa isfinaj wa kashniḏ. Wa agar agahi, kiring wa mash-i muḳshir wa gusht-i gusfand-i javan wa qataḡ-i rab-i anar wa ab-i tamr-i Hindi wa ab-i ghura saḏand. Wa agar qabḏ bashad, ab-i tamr-i Hindi wa alubukhara ba sharbat-i nilofar mel numayand, wa bargah dar tabi’iyat susti paida shawad, ein musabil ra dahand.” See *Ibid.*, ff. 111b-112a.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 112b.

attitude and hydrophobia were unique to rabies, as were many of the home-remedies. The reference to greenery as a cure for rabies also connects back to the mention of *kilukh* or *pindhi*, a kind of medicinal grass grown in north India that Khwajagi Farmuli explained at Sikandar Lodi's court while analyzing the poetic description of dog-madness in the opening anecdote of this chapter.

The *Dastur al-Ilaj*'s composition coincided with the beginning of the Mughal Empire in South Asia, where Hakim Yusufi had already arrived, and was patronized by both Babur and Humayun.¹²⁷ Yusufi rose to become the primary court physician of the 1530s, and his second text, the *'Ain al-Hayat* ("The Essence of Life"), was produced for Humayun in Delhi in 1532. It was an Arabic treatise on geriatric medicine, the first of its kind in the Islamic world. It was primarily a materia medica that contained several simple and compound drugs to cure a whole host of physical and mental illnesses, and was organized around the principle of innate heat (*hararat-i ghariziyya*). In reading the *'Ain al-Hayat*, we find many foods and other remedies for mental illnesses peppered throughout the text. It described "abnormal psychological movements" including dementia and syncope that reduced life expectancy among the elderly, along with many other ailments of the brain.¹²⁸ The *'Ain al-Hayat* has recently been translated into Urdu and English,¹²⁹ and I rely on these translations for my tabular analysis below.

Medicine or food item	Benefits
Indian gooseberry (<i>amla</i>)	Abolishes melancholia
Nepeta Hindostana (<i>badranjboya</i>), an aromatic herb	Helpful for melancholia, nightmares (<i>kabus</i>), brain obstruction, and itching from black bile (<i>saudari</i>)
Musk-willow (<i>babramaj</i>)	Strengthens brainpower (<i>qunwat-i maghṣ</i>)
Greek theriac (<i>tiryag-i kabir</i>), an antidote containing opium and sometimes animal venom	Cures snake stings, scorpion and dog bites, apoplexy, paralysis, facial palsy, epilepsy, tremors, headaches, vertigo, leprosy, insanity, evil thoughts and fever
Cinnamon (<i>darchini</i>)	Useful for dementia if taken with sugar in the morning
Gold utensils	Food and drink in them cures epilepsy and intoxication
Cold water	Cures syncope
Ring of emerald (<i>zamurrad</i>)	Protects from epilepsy, especially among children
Ginger (<i>zanjabil</i>)	Improves memory and prevents dementia
Spikenard (<i>sumbul al-teeḥ</i>)	Useful for apoplexy and insanity caused by black bile
Lily or iris flower (<i>sausan</i>) and henna flower (<i>faghis</i>)	Effective for syncope
Clove (<i>qaranfal</i>)	Prevents wind in the brain, increases libido, and cures melancholia
Citron bark (<i>qishr al-utruj</i>)	Keeps the devil away and prevents jinn possession
Lapis lazuli (<i>lajward</i>)	Acts as purgative for black bile
Fresh milk (<i>shir-i tazā</i>)	Rectifies mental derangement caused by excess black bile in the brain; acts as an aphrodisiac
Borage (<i>lisan al-thaur</i>)	Removes burnt black bile, cures insanity, palpitations, dross of spirit and fear
Meat soup (<i>ma al-lahm</i>)	Best food for treating syncope

¹²⁷ The exact date of Yusufi's migration from Herat to Delhi is unknown, but it was probably some years after he composed the *Jami' al-Fawa'id* in 1521.

¹²⁸ Ashfaq Ahmad, "A Study of an Arabic Manuscript 'Ain-Al-Hayat' Written on Geriatrics by Mohammad Ibn Yousuf Harvi and its Translation into English," *Journal of the International Society for the History of Islamic Medicine (JISHIM)*, vol. 10-11, no. 19-22 (2011), pp. 117-121.

¹²⁹ Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman, *Ain al-Hayat by Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harawi, Arabic text and Urdu translation* (Aligarh: Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine and Sciences, 2007); Ashfaq Ahmad, *Ain al-Hayat by Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harawi, translated in English* (Aligarh: Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine and Sciences, 2020).

Rose water (<i>gulab</i>)	Relieves headaches, cures syncope
Musk (<i>mashk</i>)	Benefits epilepsy when given to drink; cures apoplexy and paralysis when sniffed or applied with warm oil
Mastic (<i>mastagi</i>), a plant resin	Prevents dementia; cures melancholia when chewed
Bitumen (<i>momiya</i>)	Helps treat facial palsy, migraine, epilepsy, headaches and vertigo when applied externally or ingested
Cardamom (<i>halbua</i>)	Beneficial for epilepsy, fainting and headaches
Myrobalan (<i>halaila</i>)	Strengthens the brain, cures leprosy and wildness, sharpens memory, and purges black bile and phlegm
Ruby (<i>yaqut</i>)	Useful in melancholic insanity, helps avoid epilepsy

Figure 4. Table on medical compounds useful for treating mental illnesses in Yusuf al-Haravi's *Ain al-Hayat* (1532)

Yusufi cited several medical scholars to collate this information, including Greek authorities like Rufus, Galen and Hippocrates, Perso-Arabic ones like al-Razi, Ibn Sina and al-Majusi in the Unani tradition, as well as Charakha and Sushruta from the Ayurvedic canon. It is likely that he was introduced to Ayurvedic medicine only after his arrival in India. He made a conscious effort to study the Sanskrit texts, perhaps in translation, and cite them along with the Unani sources in which he had been trained. In addition to these medicaments, Yusufi recommended certain habits or activities that help alleviate mental illnesses. For instance, he gave the curious recommendation to reside near pigeons' nests and spend time with young pigeons to cure paralysis and syncope. Playing games like chess and dice was also suggested to stimulate inner heat and treat melancholia and insanity. He further stated that coitus abolishes ill thoughts, melancholic insanity and testicular swelling.¹³⁰ We may also note from the above table how certain items like clove and lapis lazuli were considered useful for both sexual intercourse and madness, suggesting the close intertwining of libidinous desire and mental illnesses.

In this context, the circulation of erotological manuals that touched on insanity are worth mentioning. Hakim Qasim Beg (also known as Mahmud Ayaz)'s *Miftah al-Surur-i Adil Shahi* ("Key to the Pleasures of Adil Shah"),¹³¹ a treatise on sexology written for the Sultan of Bijapur, Yusuf Adil Shah (d. 1519), discussed sexual intercourse and pleasure, different kinds of women, diseases of men and women, and various aphrodisiacs.¹³² In so doing, Qasim Beg suggested a connection between weakening of the brain (*za'if-i dimagh*) and amorous activity. In medical fashion, he explained the symptoms of a weak brain as heaviness of the body, indolence, skepticism, sleeping too much, eyes turning stony (*chashm-ha sangi numayad*), lack of desire to have sex (*arzu-yi mujami'at nabuwad*), lack of pleasure, and a flaccid and withering penis (*qazib sust-o-pazhmurda bashad*). Its treatments included substances that would strengthen the brain, including smelling fragrant things like flowers, aromatic ointments (*lakhlakha-hayi 'abr*) and musk, purging the brain of non-natural humors (*akhlal-i na-tibba'i*), consuming hot foods, drinking fresh milk from a mother-cow (*shir-i mada-yi gav*), and eating dates, almonds and pistachios.¹³³ He also prescribed avoiding congealed foods that caused semen (*mani*) to dry up and the insanity of black bile (*junun-i saudayi*) to emerge.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ See Ashfaq Ahmad, *Ain al-Hayat by Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Haravi, translated in English* (2020), pp. 44, 47, 54, 57, 64, 71-2, 77-8, 86-8, 96-8, 102, 106, 112-3, 117, 119, 121-4, 127, 129, 132-8, 143-8. Yusufi's oeuvre included two more medical texts: the *Dala'il-ul-Nabz* ("Conditions of the Pulse", 1535) and the *Sitta-yi Zururiya* ("Six Principles of Hygiene", 1540), both written under Humayun's patronage in Delhi.

¹³¹ Hakeem Mohammad Said, "Scientific and Historical Research on Medicinal Plants," *Hamdard Medicus* Vol. 58, No. 3 (2015): 19.

¹³² It was copied in 1738 under Muhammad Shah in Delhi, and later owned by Robert Watherston as apparent from a copy dated 1787. See Mahmud Ayaz, *Miftah al-Surur-i Adil Shahi*, I.O. Islamic 2306 (British Library, London).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, f. 13b.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 9b.

The intersection of insanity and sexuality was also discussed in contemporary court chronicles. According to Gulbadan Begum's *Humayunnama* ("Book of Humayun", 1587), an incident occurred in the Mughal harem in Agra in 1531. Humayun's mother, Maham Begum, expressed a desire for a grandson, and brought him Maywa-jan, the daughter of the chamberlain. Humayun slept with her that night. Three days later, one of his wives, Bega Begam, announced her pregnancy. Soon after, Maywa-jan also claimed to be pregnant. Maham Begum promised two sets of weapons to the woman who would bear a male. After nine months, Bega Begam gave birth to a daughter. But Maywa-jan remained "pregnant" even after eleven months. People must have started questioning the authenticity of her pregnancy, for she then said that her maternal aunt had had a baby in her twelfth month. Eventually, however, it was found that she had been faking her pregnancy all along. The women called her a *huspal*, which Annette Beveridge translates as "fraud". In a footnote, she also translates this as "a little mad-woman".¹³⁵

The madness of the concubine who faked her pregnancy must be viewed within a larger framework of intra-harem relations, discourses on the female body as imbued with and carrying the future sovereignty of the empire, the valorization of reproduction as adding value and worth to a woman's life in the Mughal harem, and the multiple sexual relations of the emperor with concubines as well as queens, which would have made such a tale believable in the first place. Ruby Lal argues that the word used for Maywa-jan is not *huspal*, but rather *bavasak*, which comes from the diminutive *bavas*, meaning desire or caprice. Lal writes that Beveridge's "quick dismissal of her state as 'fraudulent' – rather than, say, as a case of hysterical pregnancy – amounts to a reduction of the ambivalence and tension that marks Gulbadan's text".¹³⁶ Her characterization of this fakeness as possibly a hysterical pregnancy is a comment worth engaging, for it gives us productive insights into Maywa-jan's psychological state. The madwoman's faked or hysterical pregnancy signalled her agency that interrupted the normative life of the harem through her actions. Being pregnant meant the possibility of giving birth to a potential male heir to the throne, and therefore this was a guaranteed way of claiming importance and status in the harem. And yet, women rarely went to the lengths of feigning a pregnancy for several months. Some may have pitied Maywa-jan, some may have been struck by her audacity, and some may have found her foolish or even funny. But she nevertheless created a stir, claiming the attention of major queens and princesses including Humayun's own sister, from her position of ostensible marginality as a concubine. In the process, she was perceived as being mad. But her resistance to normative Mughal patriarchy by challenging the power of a legitimate queen with the knowledge that she might have carried the potential heir to the throne in her womb, becomes a story of how the madwoman uses madness as a tool to further her own social standing within the harem hierarchy. I will return to this theme of the madwoman's forms of rebellion in the next chapter.

Moving on from medical and gendered notions of insanity, madness was also discussed in technical terms in the *Risala dar 'Ilm-i Qiyafa* ("Treatise on the Knowledge of Physiognomy", 1537), a short anonymous text on the science of facial reading or physiognomy produced under Mughal patronage.¹³⁷ Physiognomy (*'ilm-i firasat*), or the art of recognizing facial characteristics as a way of deciphering someone's personality, was an occult science that, like astrology, geomancy, astronomy, numerology, oneirocriticism and divination, was central to the organization of social

¹³⁵ Annette Beveridge, *The History of Humayun or Humayun Nama* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1902), pp. 112-113.

¹³⁶ Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 64-65.

¹³⁷ The imperial copy of this text in the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad (U.S. 100, Acc. No. 4366) has a front page displaying the seal and handwriting of the fourth Mughal emperor Jahangir dated 1034 A.H./ 1625, who states that the manuscript was presented to him by his "revered father" (*pidar-i buzurgwaram*), Akbar, during his "days of princehood" (*dar ayyam-i shahzadagi*). There are also later autographs of the emperors Shah Jahan (1037 A.H./ 1628) and Aurangzeb Alamgir (1070 A.H./ 1660). It is therefore likely that the text was commissioned in the time of Humayun (the scribe is Mir Ali al-Katib), acquired by Akbar for the Mughal atelier, and then passed on to the next generation of Mughal rulers.

and political life in the early modern Islamic world.¹³⁸ The manuscript, which is in free verse, mentions that when the face turns a fiery red color (*rang-i surkh aatishin*), it is a sign of excessive blood, bodily haste and madness (*diwanagi*).¹³⁹ Perhaps it was the emotion of anger that led the face to turn red; but this anger, together with the rush of blood and facial agitation or twitching (also called *tishnaj* or nictations in medical texts), was a symptom of insanity as a mental illness. Further, a frown between the two eyebrows and forehead was a sign of sadness and anger. Slowly blinking the eyes indicated low comprehension and stupidity (*kam-fahmi-o-ablahi*), while eyes that struck a balance between fast and slow blinking were indications of intelligence and wisdom (*aql-o-fahm*). In this vein, extreme blackness of eyes connoted excessive black bile (*sauda*), which was synonymous with madness. The treatise notes: “Eyes that are small and blue and trembling betoken shamelessness, cunningness, trickery, and sex addiction.”¹⁴⁰ Finally, long beards signalled a paucity of intelligence (*qillat-i ‘aql*), while short beards represented comprehension (*fahm*) and elegance (*latafat*).¹⁴¹ Such interpretations of different facial features reveal an intimate bond between a person’s appearance and mental state, whose delineation was partly inspired by the increasingly advanced knowledge about psychology and medicine in contemporary Unani and Ayurvedic texts.

Madness in the *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shahi* (1547)

By the 1540s, there was a robust culture of Indo-Persian medical manuscript production with increasingly advanced chapters on mental illnesses. While Hakim Yusufi had been the premier Mughal physician in the early years, gradually the Deccan Sultanates began to commission medical texts as well. A case in point is the *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shahi* (“Treasure of Nizam Shah”, henceforth ZNS), compiled in 1547 in Daulatabad by Rustam Jurjani and dedicated to Sultan Burhan Nizam Shah I of Ahmednagar (r. 1509-53). Jurjani was a *hakim* from Gorgan, Iran, who initially worked for Khan Ahmad Gilani of Gilan (r. 1538-92) before seeking employment at the Nizam Shahi court in Ahmednagar in 1545. Prior to the ZNS, he had written two medical texts: *Asrar al-Nisa* (“Secrets of Women”) and *Risala dar Humayyat-i Murakkaba* (“Treatise on Compound Fevers”).¹⁴²

The *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shahi* (ZNS) as commissioned by Burhan Nizam Shah in 1544 and took three years to complete. It was supposedly a Persian translation of Ibn al-Baytar’s text, either *al-Mughni fi al-adwiyā al-mufradāh* or *al-Jamī‘ li-mufradat al-adwiyā wa-al-aghdbhiya*, both Arabic treatises on simple and compound medicaments, although Jurjani added to it with his own considerable knowledge of causes, symptoms and treatments for various ailments.¹⁴³ It begins customarily with the diseases of the head, describing several kinds of mental afflictions.¹⁴⁴ The number of mental illnesses described in this text is much greater than in earlier medical sources.

¹³⁸ See Anna Akasoy, “Arabic Physiognomy as a Link between Astrology and Medicine,” *Astro-Medicine: Astrology and Medicine, East and West* (2008), pp. 119-141; and Priscilla Soucek, “The Theory and Practice of Portraiture in the Persian Tradition,” *Muqarnas*, Vol. 17 (2000): 97-108.

¹³⁹ *Risala dar ‘Ilm-i Qiyafa* (U-S. 100, Acc. No. 4366, Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad), ff. 5a-b. See also Supriya Gandhi, “Locating Race in Mughal India,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 75 (2022): 1195-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 7b-8a. In Persian: “چشمی که کوچک و کیود و لرزان باشد دلیل بی شرمی و مکر و حيله و شهوت پرستیت.”

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, f. 9a.

¹⁴² C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey. Volume II, Part 2: E. Medicine* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1971), p. 244.

¹⁴³ See S.A. Hussain, “*Zakhira-e Nizām Shahi*: A Medical Manuscript of Nizam Shahi Period,” *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of History of Medicine*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1993): 59-65; Fatemeh Keshavarz, *A Descriptive and Analytical Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1986), pp. 274-6, No. 130.

¹⁴⁴ I have used a manuscript copy of the *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shahi* (ZNS) from 1631 in the Salar Jung Museum and Library, Hyderabad, Tibb. 111, Acc. No. 1741. The diseases of the head are described from f. 2a till f. 50b under the first section (باب اول: در معرفت ادویه سر). Other copies of this text are housed in the Wellcome Collection, London (WMS Per. 217) and the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD (MS P 5.1, item 1).

It is worth studying the chapters on encephalitis and insanity in some detail to understand how Jurjani pushed the field of early modern medical knowledge forward by both building on and departing from previous Unani and Ayurvedic treatises produced under Sultanate or Mughal patronage.

In the chapter on encephalitis (*sarsam*), then, Jurjani explained how the inflammation of the brain led to corruption, putrid infection and blackness (*fasad-o-ufunat-o-samad*) in the head. The senses became numb and the patient experienced a severe headache (*dard-i sar* or *sada*). It inclined towards inflammation around the joints that both mildly attracted and detached by degrees. Their eyes became red and swollen, while sleep was disorderly and untimely. It mostly occurred in the nape of the neck (*radiya*), and could lead to fainting and tetanus of the brain. This inflammation was therefore also called “gangrenous” (*shiq-qalus*, from the Greek *sphakelos*). When the inflammation reached the temporal artery (*varm-i tajviq-i sharyan*), the brain inevitably went into paroxysms (*tishnaq*) and the patient died. Bloodletting from the cephalic vein in the forehead and from under the tongue were considered beneficial to cure bloody phrenitis (*qaranitis-i kbuni*).¹⁴⁵

In the context of encephalitis, Jurjani discussed the onset of madness and confusion (*diwanagi-o-ashuftagi*). He noted that madness and confusion were strong when generated from burnt yellow bile (*sifra*). The patient was agitated by mild fever, saw disturbing dreams, and feared their own sleep. Upon exertion, their eyes turned red, sometimes yellow. Unintended tears flowed, their movements became agitated, and it appeared that something painful had befallen them. The patient rambled deliriously (*huzyan-i besyar guyad*) and forgetfulness (*nisyan*) took over them, causing them to stop conversing with their friends, being unable to give comprehensible answers. In the beginning, they were extremely restless and confused. Then, *jinn*s overcame their body, their eyes became heavy, and they pulled raw silk from their shirt. From the time that these insane were possessed (*diwana rubayad*), their tongue became coarse, mouth dry, body overpowered and inflamed by high fever, and pulse erratic and rapid. Then, due to the intensity of affliction, their spine became weaker and smaller, and their breathing labored and frequent, leaving them gasping. The extent of degeneration led to severe shooting pains in the nape of the neck. When the patient was completely overwhelmed by the blood-vessels (*aruq*) in their neck, a soothing tactic to counter the vehemence of yellow bile (*biddat-i sifra*) was to ingest medications that increase moisture, which also helped with curing bilious phrenitis (*qaranitis-i sifravi*). It was also thought prudent to tie the hands and feet of the mad patient till their agitation dissipated.¹⁴⁶

This explanation of madness as a subset of encephalitis in the ZNS is reminiscent of medical prescriptions for various mental illnesses in earlier Unani and Ayurvedic manuscripts like Nagauri’s *Shifa al-Maraḥ* (1388), Miyan Bhuwa’s *Tibb-i Sikandari* (1512), Yusufi’s *Jami’ al-Fawa’id* (1521), and Khurasani’s *Dastur al-Ilaj* (1526). That Jurjani’s *Zakbira-yi Nizām Shahi* was building on this extant scientific knowledge to discuss a combination of brain fever, delirium, jinn possession, interrupted rem cycles, physical exhaustion, labored breathing and inflamed blood vessels, indicates the wide circulation of ideas and texts across Muzaffarid, Lodi, Uzbek, Mughal and Deccani domains. There was increasingly a shared medical vocabulary between various regions of the eastern Islamicate world to delineate the changing registers of madness, despite the existence of political or military borders between empires. There was also significant unofficial transmission via book markets and bazaars, where scribes would churn out officially sanctioned texts in non-courtly settings. There are a couple of key differences worth noting, however. Insanity was usually associated with excessive black bile (*sauda*) in the brain; in the ZNS, however, the encephalitis-induced madness was linked to the burning of yellow bile (*sifra*). Another difference is the feverish temperament, which was more a symptom of encephalitis than of insanity proper.

¹⁴⁵ See ZNS, f. 12a.

¹⁴⁶ ZNS, ff. 12a-b.

Jurjani went on to discuss madness as a separate mental illness. When compared with *Dastur al-'Ilaj*'s two categories of madness – mania and rabies – the ZNS elucidated four kinds of insanity: mania (*maniya*), rabies (*da' ul-kalb*), suffering like a cactus (*sabara*), and lycanthropy (*qutrub*). Jurjani began by noting the medicines for curing madness, including drinking lotus-water (*ma' al-handaqoqa*) mixed with ordinary water, consuming fox-bitterness (*murarat al-sa'lab*) or fox-poison (*zabar-i rubah*) as a sternutatory (*sa'ut*), and sprinkling the stone from a rooster's stomach (*hajar al-dik*), which was also beneficial for epilepsy.¹⁴⁷ Just as Yusufi's *Ain ul-Hayat* (1532) had laid out some of the medicaments and herbal compounds useful for treating various mental illnesses,¹⁴⁸ the ZNS similarly prescribed lotus-water, fox-poison and rooster-stone as beneficial for patients of insanity. The text then delineates the various causes and symptoms for each type of madness.

Mania was the first type of madness, where patients were given to attacking people, since their gaze and temper turned animalistic. They spoke deliriously, and stole or broke whatever they could find. The onset of mania happened early on in the patients' youth. Jurjani explains the differences between encephalitis and mania thus: while encephalitic patients had chronic fever, their eyes turned red and periorbital veins (*rag-hayi chashm*) were throbbing, manic patients had sunken eyes, bodies emaciated by spirits (*div*), dry and coarse foreheads, pulse hardened by dryness, and reddish urine.¹⁴⁹ If a man with a crooked penis (*'alat-i kharb*) became manic, his penis remained flaccid (*mulayamat mi namud*) till it became attracted to someone (and possibly became erect again). This harks back to Qasim Beg's *Miftah al-Surur-i Adil Shahi* (1516), the Bijapuri text on sexology that described how madness caused temporary erectile dysfunction. Jurjani was clearly aware of this established relationship between insanity and virility. At times when someone took sherbet near the manic patient, they would say, "give me the goblet so that I can drink it." But they were fooling people (*ghafil mi sakht*) since after taking the sherbet, they smashed the goblet against the wall or on the caretaker's head.¹⁵⁰ This indicates an awareness of their own condition, such that manic patients were somewhat conscious of their actions and channeled their violent outbursts to perhaps deliberately fool people. Not all their symptoms were involuntary or out of their control.

Jurjani then noted how mania manifested in a female patient (*bimar-i mada*). If the cause was burnt yellow bile, she could be very impetuous, jumpy and restless (*tund-o jhanda-o ba-barkat*), but due to inherent feminine elegance (*latafat-i mada*), she returned to sanity very soon. If the cause was burnt black bile, the patient was likely to be dignified and proud (*ba-waqar-o mutakabbur*), although she could sometimes become angry or agitated for prolonged periods due to feminine impurity (*kashafat-i mada*). When mania emerged in the brightness of youth, the female patient was inflamed by black bile (*sauda-yi mutaharika*), and sometimes anger overpowered her completely.¹⁵¹ Here, the ZNS points to a gendered notion of mania, where its symptoms in female patients were perhaps both biologically and sociologically different from males. This was a novel advancement in medical knowledge that recognized the difference in male and female symptoms. And yet, Jurjani propagated stereotypes about the spectrum of "feminine" traits from elegance to impurity that impacted behaviors resulting from yellow-bile- or black-bile-induced mania.

The second kind of madness outlined in the *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi* was rabies (*da' ul-kalb*). Jurjani wrote that patients of rabies were sometimes bad-tempered (*bad-khuyi*) and other times generous and flattering (*mehrbān-o-chāplūs*). Rabies emanated from the bite of female dogs who had either burnt yellow bile (*sifra-yi sukhṭa*) or excessive black bile (*saudayī*) coagulating in

¹⁴⁷ ZNS, f. 36b. *Hajar al-dik* was a stone taken from a rooster's stomach, usually in Khurasan – see <https://abadis.ir/fatofa/حجر-الديك/>.

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁹ ZNS, f. 37a.

¹⁵⁰ ZNS, f. 36b.

¹⁵¹ ZNS, f. 37a.

their brain. These female dogs developed melancholia (*malikholiya*) due to black bile-ridden blood (*khun-i sandari*), or black bile-ridden phlegm (*balgham-i sandari*), making the temperament of the humans they bit black bile-ridden as well.¹⁵²

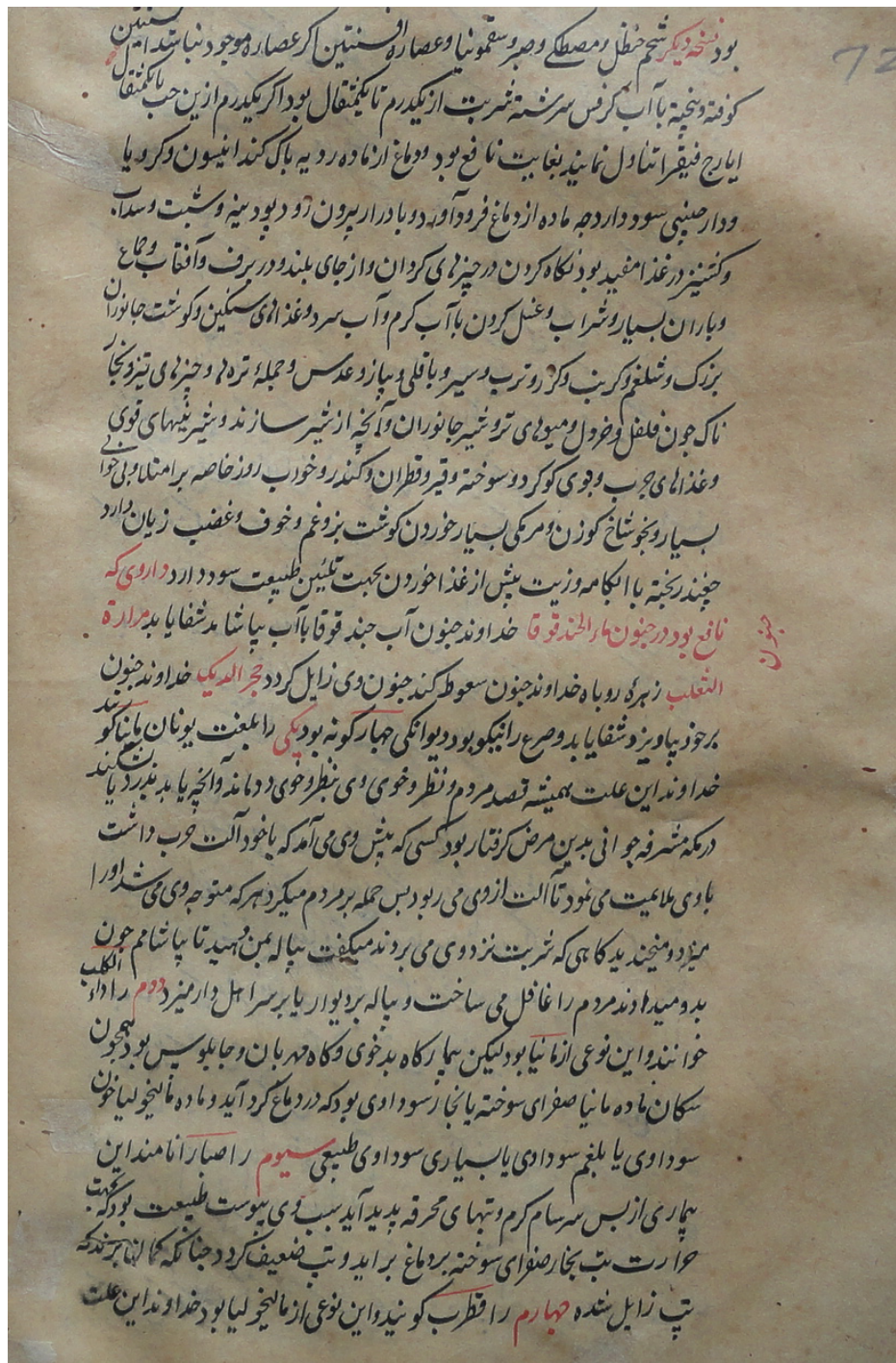


Figure 5: f. 36b from Rustam Jurjani's *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi* (Ahmednagar, 1547)
Chapters on mania (*maniya*) and rabies (*da' ul-kalb*) as subsets of insanity (*junun*)
Manuscript No. 1741, Tibb 111, © Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad

According to Jurjani, the third and fourth types of madness were suffering like a cactus (*sabara*) and lycanthropy (*qutrub*). *Sabara* emerged from hot encephalitis (*sarsam-i garm*) or burning typhoid fever (*tap-bayi muhraqa*), connected to a temperament of feverish restlessness (*hararat-i*

¹⁵² ZNS, f. 36b.

bukhar) and burnt yellow bile overwhelming the brain. The fever caused debilitating weakness, which only reduced when appropriate medicines were taken. Patients of *sabara* became severely frenzied (*sakht shorida*), even as they had lucid moments between speaking nonsense. The attention of a female made the brains of male patients restless, like ripples on clear water. Sometimes they became incontinent, put their hands in their mouths and were completely unaware of their surroundings due to foolishness (*bi-'aqli*). Lycanthropy, on the other hand, was a type of melancholia where patients were restless and could not stand still in one place. They became animalistic, like a mosquito (*pasha*) atop water suddenly moving without warning. Patients of lycanthropy moved without planning or order: sometimes their movements were circular, sometimes leftward, rightward, forward or backward. They would often take refuge in cemeteries (*panah ba-gauristan barad*), and due to excessive wandering their feet were swollen and rock-hard, sometimes sore and pus-filled. If people spotted them, they would run away. They usually appeared sour-faced and depressed (*tursh-ruyi wa ghamnak*).¹⁵³

How does this medical knowledge about various categories of madness in a Nizam Shahi text correlate to contemporary stories about insanity in court chronicles? While it is rare to find instances of direct transmission of medical knowledge in official histories, the increasing scientific acumen about mental illnesses was nonetheless perforating political texts. The vocabulary of madness used in imperial parlance was by no means divorced from these causes and symptoms of encephalitis, mania, rabies and lycanthropy described in Unani treatises like the *ZNS*. In deploying “madness” as a derogatory label to dismiss the agency and rationality of political rebels, South Asian chroniclers were aware of the technical valences of severe brain affliction. In the absence of case records by *hakims* for mental patients who were actually subjected to these diagnoses and treatments, unpacking anecdotes from the immediate milieu of the *ZNS* affords us an insight into the world of madpersons whose insanity was both politically and medically inflected.

I will therefore end this chapter by closely analyzing an anecdote of political rebellion, specifically a murder in Gujarat recorded in the *Mirat-i Sikandari* (1572), a historical chronicle of the Sultanate of Gujarat by Sikandar ibn Manjhu. According to the *Mirat-i Sikandari*, there was once a noble called Burhan who, in a fit of madness, murdered the Sultan of Gujarat, Mahmud Shah III. The latter had built his own capital in Mahmudabad, eighteen miles south of Ahmedabad. Here, on the twelfth night of Rabi ul-Awwal in the year 961 A.H. (corresponding to February 1554), which was the Prophet’s birthday (*Eid-i Milad un-Nabi*), he organized a gathering of holy men where they prayed and feasted together. Once they departed, the Sultan retired to his private chamber (*khalwat-sarai*) and requested some sherbet before sleeping. His servant, a villainous wretch (*badbakht az abl-i shiqawat*) who had the ill-omened name of Burhan and harbored imperial ambitions of his own, seized this opportunity to serve poisoned sherbet (*sharbat-i masmum*). He had already given the emperor an electuary (*ma’jun*) on the pretext of relaxing him after a long and tiring day of entertaining guests. Mahmud now drank the sherbet and went to sleep but woke up soon after feeling unwell. Realizing that there had been foul play, he demanded to know what had been mixed with his sherbet. Burhan dismissed the Sultan’s ill-health as a consequence of his exhaustion. He suggested that the Sultan should try and go back to sleep.¹⁵⁴ This was when Burhan decided to strike:

When [Burhan] saw that the Sultan was sleeping, he pulled out a special dagger, slit the Sultan’s throat and sent him to martyrdom. He therefore became deserving of eternal

¹⁵³ *ZNS*, ff. 36b-37a.

¹⁵⁴ The entire episode is described in “Chapter 33: An Account of the Sultan’s Murder, Compassion, Forgiveness and the Fate of his Murderer, Burhan the Villain” (باب سی و سوم: بیان قتل سلطان علیه الرحمته و الغفران و مآل قاتل او یعنی (برهان شقاوت نشان) in Sikandar ibn Manjhu, *Mirat-i Sikandari* (Vadodara: Dar ul-Uloom al-Latifah, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1961), pp. 372-8. I am grateful to Shireen Hamza for introducing me to this episode and the Delhi University Persian reading group for deciphering the text together in Oct-Nov 2020.

damnation and curses. Since this absurd thought [was born from] the smoke of stagnant black bile in the Sultanate of Gujarat, his brain was castrated. That same night, he sent to heaven some of the notable *wazirs* and elderly nobles who were the pillars of the Sultanate and loyal to Mahmud.¹⁵⁵

Thus, Burhan single-handedly changed the future of the Gujarat Sultanate by poisoning Sultan Mahmud Shah III and then slitting his throat lest the electuary and poison turn out to be ineffective. Burhan's murderous streak did not stop there: he also disposed of any courtiers whose loyalty to the emperor might hinder their cooperation in the transition of power, which included his prime minister Asaf Khan.¹⁵⁶ The chronicler Manjhu's interpretation of this bloody coup as a product of Burhan's madness – or literally, “the smoke of stagnant black bile” (*dud-i sauda-yi kasid*) that caused “his brain to be castrated” (*dimagh-i ou biṣṭa kardā bud*) – is crucial in his assessment of the murderer's motives. He did not feel the need to use the word “madness” (*diwanagi* or *junun*) to indicate Burhan's disturbed mental state; the mention of stagnant, possibly meaning excessive, black bile in the head was enough to suggest this. Another interpretation could be that Burhan was the source of black bile-induced insanity in the Sultanate of Gujarat. In any case, the humoral imbalance was so severe that Burhan's brain became “castrated”. This was not a literal lobotomy or brain surgery, but rather a deleterious effect of black bile where his faculty of reasoning stopped working, almost as though this had been a sub-organ of his brain that was clinically removed. His criminal actions, therefore, were considered a result of his physiological and psychological affliction rather than his deliberate calculations. By taking away his conscious agency in the execution of this “absurd thought” (*khayal-i mahaḥ*), the chronicle dismisses his intentionality in daring to assassinate the Sultan and his allies, an act so outrageous that it could only be explained by Burhan's irrationality and unsound mind.

Burhan's backstory sheds further light on his actions. His father was a man named Pyara, who was according to the *Mirat-i Sikandari* from a roguish community (*aṣṣ qawam-i arṣāl*). Pyara rose through the ranks under Sultan Mahmud and became the chief officer of the stables (*mir akbur-i tavila*). It was then that his son Burhan caught the emperor's eye. Mahmud was infamous for giving in to pleasures of the flesh (*kamrani wa shahwat-baṣṭi*, literally meaning “gratification and lustful cavorting”) with both men and women. Manjhu complains that the Sultan also had a penchant for vile people (*mayil-i barṣāl*) throughout his reign. Burhan ticked both boxes, being of low birth as well as the object of Mahmud's sexual fancy, and was consequently appointed the king's personal shoe-bearer (*kashf-bardar*). The prime minister Afzal Khan warned the Sultan to be careful and not promote Burhan to such an important post, since he claimed: “I have witnessed poison in [Burhan's] eyes and from his physiognomy I can tell, God forbid, he may harm the Sultan.”¹⁵⁷ But Mahmud ignored this advice, assured that Burhan was incapable of deceit or treachery.

Burhan, meanwhile, was engaged in pederastic obscenities (*shani'-yi lawat*) of his own, and became an alcoholic. These habits caused him to earn disfavor with the Sultan, who ordered that Burhan be trapped in the fort walls (*dar diwar-i qila bar-arand*). His parents sought pardon on their son's behalf and begged Afzal Khan to intervene, whose timely mediation with the Sultan prevented Burhan's death. From that day on, however, Burhan was gradually sidelined at the court, having been exposed as a “follower of Satan and rebel-monger” (*Shaitan-pisha wa ghadar*).

¹⁵⁵ See Sikandar ibn Manjhu, *Mirat-i Sikandari*, p. 377. In Persian:

“چون دید که سلطان بخواب رفت، خنجر خاص را کشیده بر حلق او راند. بدرجۀ شهادت رسانید و خود را سازوار لعنت ابدی و نفرین سرمدی گردانید. چون که خیال مهال [از] دود سودای کاسد سلطنت گجرات [پیدا شد]، دماغ او بیضه کرده بود. چند کس از امرای کبار که رکن سلطنت بودند در همین شب همراه سلطان عاقبت محمود بر اه عدم فرستاد.”

¹⁵⁶ See James McNabb Campbell, ed. “II. Ahmedabad Kings (A. D. 1403–1573),” in *History of Gujarat, Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. I, Part 2* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1896), pp. 259–263.

¹⁵⁷ “من در چشم او زهری مشاهده میکنم و از قیافت او می بینم که اگر عیضه بالله کوفتی، بذات سلطان لاحق میشود.” See *Mirat-i Sikandari*, p. 374.

andisha). Through this vitriolic language, the chronicler conveys his disgust with Burhan. Being a follower of Satan also implied possible jinn-possession or madness, which was conjoined with his recalcitrant nature and homosexual dalliances. While pederasty was common among both kings and nobles at the time, it was not looked upon kindly by later accounts, which often took a harsh view of these individuals. Then, on the night before the Prophet's birthday, Mahmud was out hunting in the Deer Park (*abu-khana*) of Mahmudabad, when he caught Burhan red-handed having sex (*jama*) with a young male musician (*kalawant-i pesari*). The Sultan was furious and vowed to punish Burhan. This was when the murderous motive germinated in Burhan's mind, desiring to kill the Sultan before he himself could be disciplined.¹⁵⁸

This account may remind us of the murder of Hoshang Shah, the Sultan of Malwa, at the hands of his trusted noble and father-in-law Mahmud Khalji in 1435. The similarities between the two cases are apparent: a seemingly loyal attendant of humble birth had a meteoric rise to power in the Sultan's court, got over-ambitious and plotted to kill the emperor, either directly or through a relative (Mahmud asked his daughter to poison the Sultan), and the chroniclers retrospectively described this coup as not just a rebellion but an act of madness. In both cases, the allusions to black bile, melancholia, and brain affliction suggest a medically informed chastisement of the impudent rebel. But there are some key differences, too. While the *Waqi'at-i Mushtaqi* had used the term "confusion in the brain" (*khilal-i dimagh*) for Mahmud Khalji's madness, the *Mirat-i Sikandari* noted that Burhan's brain was castrated and filled with stagnant black bile. Mahmud's motives in killing Hoshang Shah were outwardly political, and he knew enough about extant treatments for madness to dupe the court physicians. But here, Burhan's intentions were mingled with his checkered sexual past. His calculated thought process behind assassinating the Sultan of Gujarat is explained in detail, showing how even through his madness he had the presence of mind to carefully execute his plan and then kill all the Sultan's loyal nobles. This continuity in portrayals of a murder and political coup as the madness of a rebellious noble, between 1430s Malwa and 1550s Gujarat, was interspersed with advancing medical knowledge about mental illnesses in political contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the historical trajectory of how medical acumen about madness and allied mental illnesses was developing in Persian manuscripts written between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in South Asia. While these medical texts may appear to be overly prescriptive and theoretical, and therefore perhaps not worthy of the historian's attention, the developing epistemology and expanding professional vocabulary around insanity, melancholia, spirit possession, lovesickness, mania, rabies, etc. underscores the possibility of studying and interpreting these treatises on their own terms. They reveal a process of knowledge formation which was inherently cross-cultural, multilingual and multi-religious. The overlapping of the Unani and Ayurvedic traditions in particular bears testament to the intersecting world of Sanskrit and Persianate scholarship that constantly drew on each other to explain the various causes, symptoms, and treatments for madness. *Hakims* in Sultanate and early Mughal India built on the Galenic model of humoral theory that was espoused in medieval Perso-Arabic texts to understand how to diagnose and cure different imbalances in the brain. They combined this with the knowledge contained in ancient Indic treatises to explain various origins and manifestations of insanity. Long before the advent of asylums or Western psychiatry, *hakims* like Nagauri, Miyan Bhuwa, Yusufi, Khurasani, and Jurjani were interested in prescribing different culinary and

¹⁵⁸ *Mirat-i Sikandari*, pp. 374-6. In the end, Burhan's coup came to naught since the other nobles refused to accept his authority, and he was killed by a courtier named Sherwan Khan. The nobles decided to install Ahmad Khan, whom they retitled Ahmed Shah III, as the next ruler in 1554. See also Sir Edward Clive Bayley and Sir John Dawson, *The History of India as Told by its own Historians, The Local Muhammadan Dynasties: Gujarat, Sequel to Sir HM Elliot's History of the Muhammadan Empire of India* (London: WH Allen, 1886), pp. 444-50.

pharmaceutical recipes for treating madness without ostracising or marginalizing these mental patients in society.

Simultaneously, through a study of poetic tropes, imperial annals and occult manuals, I have argued that the wide dissemination of this changing medical knowledge about mental illnesses was reflected in contemporary political, literary and scientific contexts. The specific jargon of medical sources was not entirely unintelligible to lay audiences at the time. Indeed, the inherently interdisciplinary and intertextual nature of these sources forces us to methodologically consider how madness as a severe mental ailment was emplotted across various archival genres and historical landscapes. While we may not have direct evidence to show how these manuscripts were read or circulated in their South Asian milieu, the discussions of madness in non-medical Persianate contexts suggests that medical knowledge about insanity was not far removed from the anecdotes about political rebellion, religious ecstasy and women's agency. In grappling with the radical alterity of the brain, medical advancement was deeply enmeshed with the early modern zeitgeist of people in Herat, Kabul, Rajasthan, Malwa, Gujarat, Delhi, Ahmednagar and Bijapur.

Having thus laid out the medical culture of madness in South Asia in the Lodi and early Mughal periods, and emphasized the continuity in textual production before and after the beginning of Mughal imperium in 1526, in my second chapter I will turn to the ways in which this scientific knowledge was cemented through and interlinked with the discourse of rebellion, both political and gendered, as madness during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1556-1605).

Chapter 2: Madness as Rebellion

Political and Gendered Transgressions under Emperor Akbar, 1556-1605

In the Introduction to the *Akbarnama*, Abu al-Fazl, the Mughal courtier par excellence, writes that “envious blind people, who had melancholia in the brain and black bile-madness in the head”¹⁵⁹, were now guided by wisdom and loyalty to the monarch. Here, blindness was metaphorical, being a result of their unreason and deceit. Their transformation into imperial subjects under Akbar helped them regain their eyesight and rationality. But Fazl explains that mere obedience to the emperor (Akbar) and to God was not enough; those who came to the royal court also needed to demonstrate their dedication to the Truth. Indeed, if they strayed from this ordained path by making empty obeisance for the sake of asking for imperial favors, and were insincere, they would have “only proven their own folly and madness”¹⁶⁰.

Another section of the chronicle gives an account of Humayun’s short-lived conquest of the Sultanate of Gujarat in 1535, discussing the folly of his men when they decided to prematurely celebrate their victory. Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat had been mobilizing his peasantry all along, and when the peasants were sufficiently militarized to strike back, under ‘Imad-ul-Mulk they all marched through Ahmadabad and Junagarh, swelling his cavalry force to over 30,000 people. Meanwhile, the Mughal informants and spies failed to do their job; instead of keeping alert and warning the soldiers of ‘Imad-ul-Mulk’s advance, they were busy carousing. They were joined by other rank-holders, like the librarian, arms-bearer and treasurer, in the garden of Hanol (a village in Gujarat), where the “flowers give off the fresh scent of black bile-induced insanity [and] the exhilarating wind brings coagulated blood to boil”¹⁶¹. In their intoxicated state, they reduced reason and sensibility to ash (*rakebt-i ‘aql-o-bosh*) and began reading the *Zafarnama* (a history of Amir Timur’s rise to power and conquests). Feeling emboldened, and finding that they were four hundred in number, they decided “in their state of madness and senselessness” (*aẓ ‘alam-i diwanagi wa bihoshi*) to launch an attack on the Deccan. This troop of 400 men, acting without the consent or command of the emperor, deemed it fit to leave behind Gujarat and march southwards. When Humayun caught wind of their folly, he ordered his men to be brought back to the Mughal court, where they were publicly punished for their seditious behavior. Some of them were trod on by elephants, while others were beheaded.¹⁶²

The characterization of this impetuous decision as madness and folly is an important indicator of how Mughal chronicles called out the egregious nature of such political acts as going against the tenets of Reason, punishing their perpetrators severely. Such ill-timed military endeavors had grave potential consequences, including costing the empire its hard-earned territories. This imperial attitude is confirmed again in the *Akbarnama* when Abu al-Fazl, in describing the Mughal siege of Chittor in 1567, refers to Akbar’s role in preventing both rebellion and madness:

To overthrow the neck-stretching rebel is to boost administrative unity ... H.M. the Shahinshah, by the help of eternal favor ... day by day increases his efforts to treat the

¹⁵⁹ “حسد ناتوان بین که باد ماخلولیا دماغ و سودائی جنون در سر داشته ...” See Abu al-Fazl ‘Allami, *Akbarnama*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1877), p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ “... هر آینه بسفاهت یا جنون منسوب گره اند.” See *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶¹ “بوی گلهايش سودای جنون را تازه سازد. هوای دلکشایش خون خفته را بجوش آرد.” See *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 138-9. Farhat Hasan explains how Humayun’s campaign in Gujarat was short-lived because of his inability to build alliances with and win the support of the local lower- and middle-class groups – petty officials, merchants, peasants, zamindars, tribal clans. His power and connections were restricted to a narrow high elite, which was not enough to sustain prolonged Mughal rule in Gujarat. This may well have been the case, but the act of Humayun’s men deciding to move southwards into the Deccan of their own accord, especially in the face of mobilizing local peasant armies, was also an important factor in the Mughal loss of Gujarat. See Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, 1572-1730* (2004), p. 18.

severe melancholia of these corrupt-brained imbeciles.¹⁶³

How do we begin to make sense of the use of madness in these political contexts as the evil Other of Reason, Truth and Justice? More specifically, how do we comprehend and tease out the apparent conjunction between madness and rebellion? The discourse of statist loyalty to the Mughal emperor became so ingrained in courtly texts by the late-sixteenth century that any deviance from this path was immediately castigated for being irrational. Reactions to political insubordination were hardening over the years, from the time of Babur to Humayun to Akbar. The centralization of power under Akbar led to rebellions being dismissed as “madness”, since the eulogization of the Mughal emperor as the fount of reason and rationality meant that any hint of disloyalty to him was necessarily unreasonable and, by extension, insane. And yet, this hegemonic imperial ideology that was imposed from the Mughal capital in Agra (and later Fatehpur Sikri) over the ever-widening empire allowed for small gaps and interstices to express dissent. It was when this dissent outgrew these designated relief valves that rebellion was labelled madness, and the authorities had to step in to control and manage it. Indeed, as the state’s clamor for power grew increasingly audible in Akbar’s period, so too did the resistance to it.

In this chapter, I will show how the dominant register of madness in the mid-to-late sixteenth century was political and gendered rebellion. Various forms of resistance to normative structures and expected codes of conduct were castigated under the umbrella of madness. This non-conformity came from many quarters, from dissatisfied or refractory nobles to rulers misgoverning their territories to women breaking social conventions and asserting their agency. The extant medical knowledge about insanity was often weaponized to target the inexplicable actions of these rebellious actors, thus demonstrating how scientific acumen became more widespread in political and gendered contexts. But the non-medical associations of resistance and rebellion also served to expand the definition of madness across South Asia.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first delves into the case of Murtaza Nizam Shah I (r. 1565-88) in Ahmednagar, who was infamous for his maladministration, self-exile and erratic behavior. The second section discusses political insurrections under Akbar in north India, where the rebellious actions of nobles like Shah Abu al-Ma’ali, Khwaja Mu’azzam and Maulana Ghazzali were castigated for their seeming madness. Both court chronicles and poetry couched their resistance to Mughal rule in the language of unreason and melancholia. These insurrections encompassed absence from court, symbolic disobedience, organizing planned uprisings, and murder. The third part of this chapter expands on seeming transgressions of implicit social protocol by women that were considered madness. They include an extramarital affair between a Hindu woman and a Muslim noble in Agra and its possible Persianate literary inspirations, lovesickness in Firishta’s *Dastur al-Atibba* (1590) and Faizi’s *Nal-Daman* (1594), and a 1560 painting of a woman feigning insanity in the Mughal version of the *Tutinama* (“The Parrot’s Tale”). The fourth and final section takes the suicide of Manbhawati Bai, the Rajput wife of Prince Salim, in 1605, as an exemplar for the intersection of medical, political and gendered madness with notions of possible hereditary transmission of mental illness from one generation to the next.

Imperial Madness in the Deccan: The Case of Murtaza Nizam Shah I (r. 1565-88)

The last chapter ended by discussing descriptions of mental illness in the *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi*, followed by an account of the mentally imbalanced noble Burhan who was punished for an assassination attempt on the Sultan of Gujarat. If this was the fate of a rebellious noble in mid-sixteenth-century Gujarat, the question arises: was madness ever associated with

¹⁶³ "سرکشان گردن فراز را از پای در انداختن وحدت انتظامی را رونق بخشیدن است... حضرت شهنشاهی بتوفیق عنایت ازلی... در معالجه" See Abu al-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), p. 300.

early modern South Asian rulers themselves? Or were they always cast as paragons of reason and rationality? If not, in what special circumstances were rulers considered insane? It is instructive to turn to the figure of Murtaza Nizam Shah I of Ahmednagar, who was so infamous for his maladministration, constant and bloody turnover in nobility, retirement from active politics, life in seclusion, violent outbursts, and unpredictable behavior, that he is commonly referred to as *divana* (madman) by later chronicles like Sayyid ‘Ali Tabatabai’s *Burhan-i Ma’asir* (1596) and Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi’s *Tarikh-i Firishhta* (1606).¹⁶⁴ Given that the *Zakbira-yi Nizam Shahi* (1547) was commissioned by Burhan Nizam Shah I and had a long description of encephalitis and insanity, it is curious that the grandson of the patron of ZNS, a sovereign in the same court two decades later, was repeatedly associated with madness.

Murtaza Nizam Shah ascended the throne in 1565 when his father Hussain died shortly after the Battle of Talikota where Vijayanagara was routed by the collective forces of the five Deccan Sultanates.¹⁶⁵ Murtaza was still a minor; therefore, his mother, Khunza Humayun, became his regent for the first six years of his reign. When she made questionable administrative decisions and her ministers began resenting her for keeping them on a tight leash, Murtaza intervened and tried to get his mother to abdicate. After she refused, Murtaza had Khunza Humayun imprisoned and sent to the Shivneri Fort. This entrapment of his own mother was considered an early sign of Murtaza’s madness. In his initial years, he greatly promoted Shi’as in his court and increased the ranks of Sayyids (elite Muslims claiming descent from Prophet Muhammad) and *‘ulema* (theologians). In 1572, under his command, the Nizam Shahis were able to annex Berar and successfully fend off Adil Shahi encroachments into their territory.¹⁶⁶ But the years following this military victory saw a sharp decline in Murtaza’s mental state (*halat-i zahmi*). According to the *Tarikh-i Firishhta*, he was a troubled young man who suffered from craziness in the brain (*kehabt-i dimagli*) and became a hermit (*gusha-nashin*). He withdrew from the court and remained confined to his palace, not seeing anyone except one or two special servants. Most of the administrative and financial matters of the kingdom were decided by his nobles. This mental confusion (*kehila*) lasted for sixteen years till the end of his life, in 1588, when he was killed and succeeded by his son Miran Hussain Nizam Shah (r. 1588-9).¹⁶⁷

We may look at some incidents from Murtaza Nizam Shah’s reign to understand why he was labelled a *divana*. A key turning point in his rule came in 1574, when Murtaza became increasingly suspicious that his minister (*wazir*) Chingiz Khan was trying to usurp his power. He flew into a murderous rage upon hearing this from his close advisor Sahib Khan. Chingiz Khan was imprisoned and poisoned to death. But having killed Chingiz Khan, Murtaza was filled with remorse (*pashimani*), especially after he was shown evidence of Chingiz’s innocence. He lost confidence in his ability to rule and tried to repeatedly abdicate the throne, frequently escaping to neighboring regions disguised as a commoner. But each time, the public would inevitably recognize him, forcing him to come back to the Ahmednagar court. He then retired to the Ahmednagar Fort and made sure that no one except Sahib Khan was allowed to visit him. Whenever the nobles were faced with a problem or needed the Sultan’s permission, they sent

¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the section on him in the *Tarikh-i Firishhta* is titled “In reference to the reign of Abu al-Muzaffar Murtaza Nizam Shah, son of Hussain Nizam Shah, famous as *Divana*”. See Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah, *Tarikh-i Firishhta*, Vol. 2 (Bombay: Govt College Press, 1832), pp. 253-289.

¹⁶⁵ See, among others, M.T. Lycett and K.D. Morrison, “The ‘Fall’ of Vijayanagara Reconsidered: Political Destruction and Historical Construction in South Indian History”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2013): 433-470.

¹⁶⁶ Incidentally, the relationship between the Nizam Shahis and Adil Shahis was cemented by a double marriage: Murtaza married Hadiya Sultana, the sister of ‘Ali Adil Shah I (r. 1558-79), while Murtaza’s own sister Chand Bibi ended up marrying ‘Ali Adil Shah. She became the queen of Bijapur for several years before returning to Ahmednagar in 1590 after Murtaza’s death. Chand Bibi acted as Regent in both Bijapur and Ahmednagar, successfully defending Nizam Shahi territory against Akbar’s incursions in 1595. See Sayyid Ahmad-Ullah Qadri, *The Memoirs of Chand Bibi: The Princess of Ahmednagar* (Ahmednagar: Tarikh Office, 1939).

¹⁶⁷ See *Tarikh-i Firishhta*, Vol. 2, p. 253.

him a petition through Sahib Khan, to which he responded in writing.¹⁶⁸

News of Murtaza's madness and self-exile, and the gradual weakening of the Ahmednagar Sultanate, reached Akbar's ears. In 1576 (984 A.H.), Akbar visited the *dargah* of Muinuddin Chishti in Ajmer and captured the Kumbhalgarh Fort, which was then under the Rajput king of Udaipur. Then, Firishta writes:

The Badshah [Akbar] went from Ajmer to the highlands of Banswala and Mandu and, while hunting, reached the Deccan frontier. He learnt that Murtaza Nizam Shah, the king of Ahmednagar, had gone mad and was living in seclusion. [Akbar] thought this was a good opportunity to conquer that province. However, he was approached by a few nobles who asked him to return to Fatehpur Sikri.¹⁶⁹

Thus, it was Murtaza's withdrawal from active politics that was seen as the ultimate sign of his insanity. His desire for seclusion (*parda-nashini*) was closely tied to his descent into madness (*diwana shudan*), exposing his kingdom to avaricious neighbors like Akbar. This madness was a form of rebellion where Murtaza refused to abide by the rules of kingship, giving up his throne and retiring in seclusion even though the public expected him to govern. Fazl, in the *Akbarnama*, calls him Murtaza "Nizam-ul-Mulk" and aphoristically notes that due to his withdrawal from politics, "...the shining jewel of wisdom fell into the dark ravine of black bile, due to which [his] realm and religion were endangered."¹⁷⁰ When Murtaza heard about Akbar's advance through Malwa and his desire to conquer Ahmednagar, he did not back down, instead gathering an army of a hundred soldiers and marching to Daulatabad to confront Akbar. His nobles had to talk him down from initiating a war with the Mughals.¹⁷¹

Earlier historiography by Sir Wolseley Haig, Radhey Shyam, and others posited Murtaza Nizam Shah as an aberrant, ineffective ruler whose madness set the wheels in motion for the downfall of the Ahmednagar Sultanate until it was conquered by the Mughals in 1600.¹⁷² However, this line of argument ignores the major achievements of his reign. The Ahmednagar kingdom reached its maximum territorial extent under Murtaza Nizam Shah I. Further, the first known copper coins in the Deccan were minted in 1581 with his imperial seal. He also patronized several Bhakti and Sufi saints, such as Eknath (1522-99), Janardan Swami (1504-75), Chand Bodhale Qadiri and Shaikh Muhammad Shrigondekar (1548-1618), among others, who have left behind writings and songs in Persian, Marathi and Dakhani.¹⁷³ Finally, Murtaza commissioned the Bagh-i Farah Bakhsh ("The Joy-Bestowing Garden") in Ahmednagar, completed in 1583. Together with the Hasht Bihisht Bagh ("The Garden of the Eight Paradises"), this formed the Nizam Shahi personal estate where poetic contests (*musha'iras*) were held with diplomatic guests.¹⁷⁴ This garden gained popularity, as evinced by the Mughal ambassador Faizi's note in his *Insha-yi Faizi* (1593): "During the insanity of Mir Murtaza Khan

¹⁶⁸ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, p. 265.

¹⁶⁹ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 1 (Bombay: Govt College Press, 1832), p. 500. In Persian:

"پادشاه از اجمیر بکوهستان بانسواله و مندو در آمد و شکار کنان تا سرحد دکن رفته. چون مرتضیٰ نظام شاه بحری والی احمدنگر دیوانه شده پرده نشین گشته بود و اعیه تسخیر ولایت او نمود. اما بعضی امور مافع آمده از اینجا متوجه فتح پور سیکری گردید."

¹⁷⁰ Maulavi 'Abd-ur-Rahim (ed.), *Akbarnama*, Vol. 3 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1884), p. 456. In Persian:

"...گوهر تابناک خرد بسیاه چال سودا در افتاد، و بزبان کاری دین و دنیا سراسیمه شد."

¹⁷¹ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, pp. 266-7.

¹⁷² See Wolseley Haig, *The History of the Nizam Shahi Kings of Ahmednagar* (Bombay: British India Press, 1923), pp. 102-182; Radhey Shyam, "Ch 5: Murtaza Nizam Shah I" in *The Kingdom of Ahmednagar* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), pp. 151-198; and Shyam, "Ch VI: The Nizām Shāhīs and the 'Imād Shāhīs", in H.K. Sherwani and P.M. Joshi (eds.), *History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724* (Hyderabad: Govt of Andhra Pradesh, 1973), pp. 248-255.

¹⁷³ Sheikh Musak Rajjak, "Spiritual Coexistence in Marathi Literature of Sufis in Deccan History," *International Research Journal of Management Sociology and Humanity*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (2017): 168-181; Pushkar Sohoni, "Vernacular as a space: writing in the Deccan," *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2016): 258-70.

¹⁷⁴ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, p. 279.

[i.e., Murtaza Nizam Shah], Salabat Khan built a garden for him named Farah Baksh, which has several cypress trees. In the middle of this is a monument with a reservoir. This servant has not seen it.”¹⁷⁵



Figure 6. Portrait of Murtaza Nizam Shah I (r. 1565-88) of Ahmednagar
© Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

But the Bagh-i Farah Bakhsh did not remain standing for long. Both Firishta and Tabatabai were witness to Murtaza walking around it, complaining to its architect Ni'mat Khan, and ordering Salabat Khan to have it immediately demolished in 1584 despite the lakhs of rupees

¹⁷⁵ See Abu al-Faiz Faizi, "Second Petition" (*Arzdasht-i Duvvum*), in A.D. Arshad and Hamid Ahmad Khan (eds.), *Insha-yi Faizi* (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqi-yi Adab, 1973), p. 104. In Persian:

"در ایام جنون میر مرطضی خان، بیرون شهر صلابت خان بنامش باغی ساخت فره بخش نام. سرو بسیار دارد و عمارتی است در میان حوض. بنده آن را ندیده."

See also Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A Place in the Sun: Travels with Faizi in the Deccan, 1591-93", *Sources and Time: A Colloquium* (ed. Francois Grimal, Institut Français de Pondicherry, 2001), p. 285.

spent on its construction.¹⁷⁶ Emma Flatt has argued that this was not an entirely irrational or unjustified reaction, despite most scholars and contemporary chroniclers attributing this erratic and bizarre decision to Murtaza's madness (*diwanagi*). The triangles in the Farah Bakhsh's central edifice were considered inauspicious since they were not in accordance with astrological prescriptions mentioned in the *Nujum al-'Ulum* ("Stars of the Sciences", c.1570), an illustrated manuscript on occult sciences commissioned by none other than Murtaza's brother-in-law 'Ali Adil Shah in Bijapur.¹⁷⁷

Pushkar Sohoni highlights how Murtaza Nizam Shah's paranoia grew through the 1580s, leading to arbitrary executions of his closest nobles on the bad advice of his *wazir* Sahib Khan. Sahib Khan conspired to murder the Afaqi (foreigner) faction in the Ahmednagar nobility, which comprised mostly Iranian elites. Twice, they had to flee the massacres and seek employment in Bijapur or Golconda. Murtaza also felt increasingly threatened by his brother Burhan Nizam Shah II, who kept resurfacing to try and wrest power away from Murtaza. Playing on these insecurities, Sahib Khan provoked Murtaza against his own son, Miran Hussain, whom Murtaza tried to assassinate by locking him in a windowless cell and setting fire to it so that Miran Hussain would asphyxiate to death from the smoke. But Miran Hussain managed to escape to Daulatabad. Sahib Khan was later killed by other nobles, and Murtaza appointed Salabat Khan as his new *wazir*. This was a period of rising political fortunes for certain groups of nobility who established their own strongholds and became semi-autonomous. Among them were the Habshis (including Malik Ambar), the Marathas (led by Shahji Bhonsle), and the Dakhni Muslims. They bided their time, anticipating the disintegration of Ahmednagar Sultanate under their erratic, *dimana* ruler.¹⁷⁸

In his last years, Murtaza was smitten by a dancing girl named Fatehi Khan, and retired with her to Hasht Bihist Bagh. She began to exercise such power over Murtaza's kingdom that she once commanded the *wazir* Salabat Khan to bring her all the rubies and diamonds from the Nizam Shahi treasury, which was considerably rich after the spoils of Talikota. Salabat Khan, setting aside the most precious jewels, gave the rest to Murtaza and Fatehi Khan. When she complained that they had only received some of the jewels, Murtaza was livid (*dar-khashm shuda*) at Salabat Khan's disobedience. He wrapped the necklaces and other jewels in a carpet and, without regard for their value, set them on fire (*dar aatish afkand*). He stormed out of the room in anger, after which the nobles present tried their best to salvage whatever remained by extinguishing the fire and pulling out the half-burnt jewels. In the aftermath of this incident, Firishta writes:

People attributed the reason for this bizarre and unnerving action to the Padshah's insanity and madness. From that day on, [he] became famous by the title of 'Diwana'. Some of the bawdy people approached Nizam Shah and told him, "The pillars of government are displeased with your seclusion and want to raise your son Miran Hussain to the throne."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, pp. 279-80; Tabatabai, *Burhan-i Ma'asir* (ed. Sayyid Hashimi Faridabadi, Hyderabad: Majlis-i Makhtutat-i Farsiya, 1355/1936), pp. 492-3.

¹⁷⁷ Flatt, "Ch 9: Heavenly Gardens: Astrology and Magic in the Garden Culture of the Medieval Deccan" in Flatt and Daud Ali (eds.), *Garden and Landscape Practice in Pre-colonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), pp. 172-193, especially pp. 174-6, 189.

¹⁷⁸ Sohoni, "Ch 2: Multiple Pasts: The Nizam Shahis of Ahmednagar" in *The Architecture of a Deccan Sultanate: Courtly Practice and Royal Authority in Late Medieval India* (London and New York: IB Taurus, 2018), pp. 22-64. He also discusses the reign of Murtaza Nizam Shah I in a video on the YouTube channel of Live History India, titled "The 'Mad' King Murtaza": https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=hefFYkqc0AQ&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1BsGcZv9Om2ollYa-hBootCY7QF9_cM6sQXj5PJ9lWugLpwzv-EV5R8.

¹⁷⁹ The entire story is recounted in *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, pp. 283-4. This quote in Persian reads:

"مردم معنی این حرکت عجیب و غریب را حمل بر جنون و دیوانگی آن پادشاه کردند. از آن تاریخ مشهور و ملقب بدیوانه گردید. و همچنین لولیهها بعض نظام شاه رسانیده بودند که ارکان دولت از پرده نشینی تو دلگیر گشته میخواهند پسر میران حسین را پادشاهی بردارند."

Eventually, it was the return of his son Miran Hussain from Daulatabad with a strong army in 1588 that sounded the death-knell for the *divana*. A desperate Murtaza solicited the advice of Firishta, who suggested that he trust Salabat Khan to lead the battle and protect Murtaza. However, by the time Salabat Khan arrived, it was too late; Miran Hussain made sure his father died of suffocation imprisoned in a burning room, the same way Murtaza had previously tried to assassinate his son.¹⁸⁰

Thus, most of Murtaza's reign was marred by his political madness, even though it was not medicalized and *bakims* were never called upon to treat or cure him. Tabatabai's *Burhan-i Ma'asir* offers an entirely divergent perspective on the matter. It opines that even though physicians and scholars of the age had considered Murtaza to be a raving lunatic, in reality all his actions and words were indications of his erudition and sanity (*kbirad-o-'aqli*). He was learned enough to ask meaningful existential and spiritual questions of the wise men in his assembly, therefore suggesting a rational, well-ordered mind.¹⁸¹ Most historians have tended to disagree with Tabatabai, arguing that he was misguided in his praise for the Nizam Shahi ruler who was aptly titled *divana*. Certainly, Murtaza managed to flip the script and become a unique case of an emperor considered insane by his ministers and subjects. His unorthodox political decisions, personal seclusion, paranoid suspicions, and the changing factions in his nobility suggest a radically different mode of kingship from his Mughal counterpart. It is therefore worth turning our attention now to north India to understand how the "madness" of seditious nobles played out under Akbar.

Political Rebellion as Madness under Akbar

The second volume of the *Akbarnama* discusses in some detail the case of Shah Abu al-Ma'ali, a courtier who had been greatly favored by Humayun, but who according to Fazl and Badauni was notorious for causing trouble. Abu al-Fazl begins by describing Abu al-Ma'ali's deeds as rebellious (*shorish*) because the "essence of his brain was disturbed" (*jauhar-i dimagh-i ou parishan shuda bud*). Several reasons are given for this proposition. For one, he did not drink in moderation, and this intoxication mixed with his arrogance and self-adulation to cause madness. Another possible reason was that "black bile in the head and melancholia had greatly corrupted his brain and incited the elements of his insanity".¹⁸² In addition, Fazl mentions that Ma'ali had been bit by a mad rabid dog as well as a scorpion.¹⁸³

Fazl clearly stayed abreast of the latest medical advances, enough to know that excess black bile in the brain was the leading cause of melancholia, which corrupted the brain and catalysed madness. He was also aware that the bite of a rabid dog or a scorpion could trigger a humoral imbalance in the victim and lead to rabies. This was possibly inspired by the *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi*'s description of rabies.¹⁸⁴ Fazl was no doubt well-versed in the causes and symptoms for rabies. Even if he had not read the *ZNS* in particular, he had read enough medical treatises (perhaps by Yusufi or Khurasani) to speculate the reasons for Shah Abu al-Ma'ali's madness. It is also not outside the realm of possibility that the *ZNS* travelled from Ahmednagar to Agra, so Mughal courtiers may have had access to its descriptions of mental illness.

Finally, writes Fazl, some spiteful, foolish imperial servants had given Abu al-Ma'ali bad advice, fueling his antagonism and disrespect towards the Mughal court. It is this last reason that appears to have played the most significant role in Ma'ali's association with madness. Sometime

¹⁸⁰ *Tarikh-i Firishta*, Vol. 2, pp. 288-9.

¹⁸¹ *Burhan-i Ma'asir*, pp. 542-3. See also Sir Wolseley Haig, *The History of the Nizam Shahi Kings of Ahmednagar* (1923), p. 182.

¹⁸² "سودای سری و مالیخولیای سروری بیشتر موجب فساد دماغ و تهیج مواد جنون او شد" *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), p. 15.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *ZNS*, f. 36b. See the previous chapter of this dissertation, pp. 43-44.

after Humayun's death in 1556, and only three days after Akbar's accession, the young emperor's regent Bairam Khan organized a banquet for Akbar where all courtiers were invited. But Ma'ali did not come, saying that he was still grieving for Humayun. Such an obvious act of disobedience did not go unnoticed. As Fazl writes, "fumes of black bile were circulating in [Ma'ali's] head" (*dud-i sauda dar sar pichid*), continuing that that "intoxicated narcissist" (*badmast-i khud-parast*) eventually came to the assembly upon being reprimanded, but only after making his arrival conditional on a number of demands, since raw black bile (*sauda-yi kham*) was in his nature. Bairam Khan and Akbar decided to arrest Ma'ali following his appearance at court. This happened when he extended his hands to wash them and was taken by surprise. Fazl suggests that the arrest was for the madman's own benefit. Ma'ali was then chained and taken to a prison in Lahore because of his "evildoing and seditious behavior".¹⁸⁵

It was his refusal to abide by court etiquette, rather than a medical concern for his welfare stemming from the symptoms of his mental condition, that led to Ma'ali's confinement. Even if Fazl discusses the possible medical reasons for his madness – alcoholism, the excess production of black bile, or the bite of a rabid animal – in the end, it was his overt political dissent that was the strongest manifestation of his supposed mental imbalance. His reluctance to attend *darbar* was in direct contravention of court decorum and expected noble conduct, and this defiance was explained as his madness. Indeed, the sheer act of calling such actions "madness" was pejorative. Ma'ali may well have expressed his loyalty to Humayun, but his reluctance to do the same for Akbar resulted in perceptions of him as a "mad sedition-monger" (*diwana-yi fitna-angiz*). For Fazl, whose work forty years later embodied this imperial agenda, it was necessary to highlight the gravity of Ma'ali's transgressions, and to warn Fazl's contemporary nobles of similar treatment if they ever breached the symbolic norms that upheld Mughal sovereignty. This was a time when the empire was still finding its feet in the subcontinent, when a new emperor who was all of thirteen had just ascended the throne. Such rebellious behavior could not be allowed to go unpunished or unnoticed, for it would have conveyed to others that such infractions were taken lightly by the young ruler who was yet to prove his mettle. Any sign of disobedience had to not only be immediately checked, but also explained as illogical and therefore mad.

Badauni's *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* presents a slightly different story. Once, around the time of Humayun's death, Ma'ali drank too much wine, became intoxicated, and killed a fellow courtier who had just arrived from Iraq. According to Badauni, this act was motivated by his Sunni bigotry, for the man slain was a zealous Shi'a. Ma'ali was summoned to court a few times to answer for his crime, which he initially denied, and finally came to court the same day as Akbar's accession. Bairam Khan had Ma'ali arrested, and the nobles clamored for him to be executed. But Akbar's munificence (*karam-pisha*) prevented this from happening, and instead he was sent to Lahore.¹⁸⁶ Badauni's version of events must be contextualized in terms of his dissatisfaction with the Mughal court, which was very different from Fazl's imperially loyal, almost obsequious, justification for Shah Abu al-Ma'ali's arrest. Badauni's view of Ma'ali reflects the extent of disorder and lawlessness that had come to prevail, since such seditious acts bore testimony to how nobles were acting outrageously and irascibly. Akbar's soft-heartedness prevented him from taking necessary harsh actions like ordering Ma'ali's execution.

After being imprisoned in Lahore, Ma'ali managed to escape from there, and traveled through Kashmir, Sialkot and Dipalpur, getting caught but escaping every time. He was then sent to Gujarat, where Bairam Khan was stationed at the time. But Bairam Khan handed him over to someone else, whose supervision proved insufficient in controlling Ma'ali as "his unruliness and madness led him to improper actions and even committing murder".¹⁸⁷ Bairam

¹⁸⁵ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), pp. 15-17.

¹⁸⁶ Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, eds. Captain W.N. Lees, L.L.D. and Munshi Ahmed (Calcutta: College Press, 1865), pp. 9-10.

¹⁸⁷ "از ناهمواری که داشت و دیوانگی که در سرش بود، حرکت ناشایسته را مسدود شد، و خونی کرد..." See *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), p. 103.

Khan finally took matters into his own hands and incarcerated him in Bayana Fort. It was Bairam Khan, too, who released Ma'ali from there in 1560, along with another prisoner, Muhammad Amin "Diwana", on his way to Alwar. Akbar happened to be passing through Jhajjar at that time, and Ma'ali accosted him there, performing the *kornish* (a kind of salutation) from his horse instead of getting down first. Nizam al-Din Ahmad and Badauni state that he tried to either salute or embrace the emperor, both of which were nearly impossible to execute from horseback.¹⁸⁸ When Akbar ordered that the madman be put in chains (*an diwana-kehiṣṣa ra ṣanjir farmuda*), his men convinced him to let Ma'ali go free, reminding him of his duty to forgive rebels and perform his magnanimity. The rhetoric of forgiving rebels in the hope that this would make them grateful and loyal in the future was an old trick, since it represented the king's justice. Akbar's generosity and fairness thus got the better of him. But probably just this once, Fazl disagreed with his employer. He believed Ma'ali's head, the source of his madness, should have been severed from his body.¹⁸⁹

The symbolic gesture of not getting down from his horse to perform the *kornish* displays Ma'ali's obduracy and disrespect for royal protocol, and this could not be tolerated in the *Akbarnama*, which was written in the 1590s, thirty years after the fact. The imperial discourse had changed over these thirty years: it had hardened, become more unforgiving, and demanded loyalty and submission. The range of acts that constituted one's 'madness' is also evident here: from openly rebelling to improperly greeting the emperor. And in some ways, the latter was a graver offence in Fazl's eyes. An enactment of such etiquette through the body of the imperial servant was constitutive of his subjecthood, and it was therefore expected of all subjects, especially if they were employed directly by Akbar. Physical supplication was a marker not of showing extreme respect to the emperor, but rather of being so awestruck by his aura and being in his presence that obeying such protocol was the least one could do. Its violation had to be rendered unthinkable in the mind of a Mughal servant.

Other rebels described as mad by Abu al-Fazl include Wali Beg, who supported Bairam Khan in his rebellion against Akbar, was beheaded in battle, and whose friends suspected him of madness (*diwanagi*); Mirza Sharif al-Din Husain, who was made the commander-in-chief (*amir al-'umara*) of Nagaur but absconded from the court in 1562 when "insane designs and melancholic motives entered his head" (*khayalat-i junun wa andisha-hayi malikholiya dar sarish uftad*); 'Ali Quli Khan, whose rebellious madness (*diwanagi-yi fitna-angiṣṣa*) was set right by Akbar when he was sent to Allahabad; and Sher Muhammad Diwana, who from his hometown of Samana played a role in 'Ali Quli Khan's rebellion.¹⁹⁰ The second of these – Mirza Sharif al-Din Husain – is mentioned again in connection with Abu al-Ma'ali. After the debacle where the emperor forgave him, Ma'ali was sent to Mecca. On his return to Gujarat, he made a beeline for Delhi and Agra, motivated by his "innate sedition-mongering and commotion-seeking nature" (*ba-khayal-i fitna-angiṣṣi wa fasad-tarazṣi*). Ma'ali found an ally in Sharif al-Din Hussain, and together they launched an attack on Hajipur and Narnaul, hoping to bring Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, from Kabul to displace Akbar in Hindustan.¹⁹¹ Here, Abu al-Fazl paints Ma'ali as a "troubled young man with an ill-fated brain" (*jawan-i parishan [ba] dimagh-i badbakht*) whose rebellion with Sharif al-Din Hussain in Narnaul was easily suppressed by Akbar's army. Even though Ma'ali, that "mad dog" (*sag-i diwana*), managed to escape again, this time he came close to Mathura, where Akbar was resting. Following a skirmish, Akbar's men captured Ma'ali and ended his mischief forever.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ See Nizam al-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, Vol. 2 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1931), p. 146; *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, Vol. 2, pp. 38-40.

¹⁸⁹ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2, pp. 103-4.

¹⁹⁰ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), pp. 115, 195, 258-263.

¹⁹¹ See Munis D. Faruqi, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2005): 487-523.

¹⁹² *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), pp. 198-200.



Figure 7. "The Young Emperor Akbar Arrests the Insolent Shah Abu al-Ma'ali"
 from *Akbarnama*, c. 1590/95, designed by Basawan, painted by Shankar
 © Lucy Maud Buckingham Collection, Art Institute of Chicago

As Laura Perodi notes, visual depictions of Abu al-Ma'ali from Humayuni to Akbari paintings suggest the changed imperial attitude towards him. While a portrait from his lifetime by Ustad Dust reflects his Central Asian heritage and allegiance to Humayun, posthumous paintings illustrate episodes from the *Akbarnama* where he comes across as a cantankerous rebel who dared to challenge Akbar's sovereignty. In the above painting of the Mughal court in Agra in 1556, Ma'ali is dressed in orange robes, being arrested by Bairam Khan and his soldiers for refusing to attend the thirteen-year-old seated Akbar's inaugural *darbar*.¹⁹³

This case of Shah Abu al-Ma'ali, beyond giving us an insight into a conceptualization of rebellion as madness in the early Akbari period, also reveals how Fazl's own status as court scribe and imperial representative defined his staunch opposition to any act that was even remotely seditious. He also described other rebellions early in Akbar's reign in vitriolic terms, the most striking of which was orchestrated by Akbar's foster-brother Adham Khan, who killed Ataga Khan, Akbar's foster-father, in 1562. When Akbar learned of the murder, he called Adham a "demented wretch" (*bakht-i bargashta*) and a "son of a fool" (*bacha-yi lauda*), and threw him off the parapet in anger, smashing his head.¹⁹⁴ For Fazl, even high-ranking nobles like Adham Khan and Shah Abu al-Ma'ali were not immune to the label of madness. They had performed transgressive acts whose rebellious nature was deemed outside the bounds of stately rationality, and they were, by extension, insane.

As we have seen, however, Badauni and Nizam al-Din Ahmad were not as close to the emperor as Abu al-Fazl. Although Ahmad's account, the *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, was also dedicated to and named after Akbar, his distance from the king lent his chronicle a somewhat indifferent texture. He does not present Ma'ali's rebellious acts as madness, but rather depicts them as being similar to the other disloyalties that Akbar had to crush in his early reign. He writes that "wicked thoughts" were circulating in Ma'ali's head, and even though the Khan-i Khanan wanted him dead, the emperor's soft-heartedness prevented this from happening.¹⁹⁵ When Akbar's army tried to suppress Ma'ali and Sharif al-Din's rebellion in Hajipur and Narnaul, Ahmad mentions that Ma'ali fled from Hajipur to Narnaul to Punjab, with Mughal soldiers in hot pursuit. He gives details of this chase,¹⁹⁶ which Fazl does not. Perhaps the latter felt the details of the escape were not important in the larger story of how Ma'ali was eventually caught and the emperor's justice prevailed.

This brings us to the final anecdote about how Shah Abu al-Ma'ali met his end in 1564. After his failed insurrection in Narnaul, he was on the run from the Mughal army, through Punjab and Kashmir, and then onwards to Kabul. Before reaching his final destination, Ma'ali wrote a letter to Mah Chuchak Begum, the mother of Akbar's half-brother, Mirza Hakim, the regent and effective governor of Kabul. Ma'ali promised to marry her daughter Fakhr-un-Nisa Begum in return for her protection. Mah Chuchak Begum was gullible enough to fall for this plan, and readily gave him asylum from Mughal soldiers while also giving permission for the union between her daughter and Ma'ali. Fazl complains here that she didn't even bother to seek the emperor's counsel before approving this match. As Mah Chuchak Begum's son-in-law, Ma'ali's seditious nature resurfaced when he became began to covet control over Kabul. His similarly ill-suited friends turned him against his mother-in-law, since they reasoned that she was the only remaining obstacle between him and the seat of power. Ma'ali entered the harem one night with two of his friends; together, they broke into Mah Chuchak Begum's bedroom and murdered her. Fazl writes that Ma'ali, in committing this heinous crime, "lost the key of reason, which he did not possess to begin with, in the abyss of ignorance" (*kalid-i 'aqli ki nadasht dar tiya-yi jahalat gum kard*), implying his unreason or insanity. An army of the Begum's servants, headed

¹⁹³ Perodi, "Shah Abu'l-Ma'ali, Mir Sayyid 'Ali, and the Sayyids of Tirmiz: Three Portraits Challenge Akbari Historiography," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 35 (2018): 125-143.

¹⁹⁴ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), pp. 173-8.

¹⁹⁵ *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, Vol. 2, p. 127.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-7.

by Mirza Sulaiman and Haram Begum, came to defeat and kill Abu al-Ma'ali in retribution. Mirza Hakim, horrified by his mother's death at the hands of his new brother-in-law, initially seemed to support Ma'ali but later betrayed him and brought him to Sulaiman. Ma'ali pled for his life, but was strangled to death.¹⁹⁷ Fazl declares triumphantly, "the world was purified of his devilish existence, and he dug a grave for himself with his own actions."¹⁹⁸

Although Abu al-Ma'ali eventually became Akbar's half-brother-in-law towards the end of his life, the label of madness was applied to his actions long before he came to be related to the emperor by marriage. This raises the question: what happened when direct family members of the Mughal emperor turned violent or disloyal? Were their behaviors considered insane by court chroniclers? Here, we can turn to Khwaja Mu'azzam, Akbar's maternal uncle, his mother Mariam Makani or Hamida Banu Begum's half-brother. The Khwaja would often consume sense-dulling drugs, become intoxicated and immoderate (*bad mast-i bi-a'itdal shuda*), and on one such occasion, attacked Akbar's chief revenue officer (*divan*). Due to his continued misdemeanors, Akbar eventually expelled him to the Hijaz, where he perpetrated further "wickedness upon wickedness" (*shararat bar shararat kard*). Even after coming back to Agra, he attacked an important noble (*amir*) and behaved rudely with Bairam Khan. He was once more sent away, this time to Gujarat. But on account of his relations with the royal family, he was treated with kindness and consideration, given a revenue landholding (*jagir*) there, and brought back to the palace.¹⁹⁹

Some, if not all, of this behavior was surely considered rebellious, and the lack of its attribution to madness might appear perplexing. But this approach exposes the pitfalls of reading *all* rebellion as madness; there are several instances in the *Akbarnama*, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, and *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* where various kinds of rudeness, disobedience or even outright revolt were not immediately deemed mad. The authors of these texts called them wicked, evil-minded or disloyal, but their representation as mad or insane was conditional on several factors: the perpetrator of the act, their social status and political position, the extent of egregiousness of their act, and the author describing them as such. Thus, had the troublemaker been someone other than the Khwaja, i.e., someone unrelated by blood to the emperor or the royal family, perhaps Fazl would not have been so cautious in describing him. But because the Khwaja was the emperor's uncle, he was given greater leeway and not immediately deemed mad, not even after he attacked nobles in open court. The Khwaja was allowed to get away with this because he himself held a privileged position vis-a-vis the courtiers. So far, these acts weren't directed at the emperor, or in contravention of his orders; when this happened, as we shall see, Fazl no longer shied away from calling the Khwaja mad.

Despite many reprieves, Khwaja Mu'azzam refused to improve his ways. He overstepped the line in 1565 when he started harassing a girl in his harem, Zahra Agha. Fazl points to the "wickedness and mistrust that were in his nature",²⁰⁰ which led Mu'azzam to threaten to take the girl away with him to his *jagir*. Zahra Agha's mother, who held a high position in the royal harem, complained to the emperor about her daughter's abduction. Akbar, out of his regard for her years of service, promised to go with some of his attendants to his uncle's house to talk some sense into him. As they approached his uncle's house, Akbar knew that should the Khwaja be "in his usual state of madness" (*dar maqam-i diwanagi bashad*), things might get out of hand, and so he sent some of his men ahead of him. But that immoderate madman (*divana-yi bi-a'itdal*) refused to listen to them or come in front of the emperor. Instead, he pulled out his dagger, went into Zahra Agha's room as she was getting dressed after bathing, and slew her. He then flung the blood-stained sword out of the window at the men standing outside, announcing that they should go tell the emperor that he had killed the girl. When they did so, an appalled Akbar came

¹⁹⁷ *Akbarnama*, pp. 203-7; *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, pp. 168-170.

¹⁹⁸ "عالم از وجود خبیث او پاک شد، و بیای سعی و احتیاط خود بخوی حلاقت شتافت." *Akbarnama*, p. 207.

¹⁹⁹ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 2 (1876), pp. 216-7.

²⁰⁰ "از بدخوی و بدگمانی که در طبیعت او است..." *Ibid.*, p. 217.

into the house and saw the madman leaning confidently on his sword. But on seeing the emperor before him, he was overcome with awe. Mu'azzam's hands and feet buckled under, and Akbar's men straitjacketed him. When Akbar demanded a reason for his murder of the unlucky girl, "that fearless, bloodthirsty one raved deliriously"²⁰¹ till he was smacked and silenced. Mu'azzam was taken kicking and screaming to a nearby river, where the current was very strong, and the waves were crashing on the shore. He was threatened with being thrown into that "whirlpool of wrath that was frothing [like] an ocean of justice"²⁰² – it would be a fitting end to his "intoxication and pigheadedness" (*badmasti wa ashufta-dimaghi*). Although he was immersed in the water, his resistance and violent struggle prevented him from being swept away by the tide. He was sent to Gwalior and imprisoned, where melancholia (*malikholiya*) took possession of him, and he died of a corrupted brain (*fasid-dimagh*).²⁰³

So far, we have only encountered rebellious madness from the perspective of court chroniclers who represented an imperial agenda to varying degrees. The characterization of rebellion as madness was conditioned by the author in question, and his respective motives and positionality in the Mughal world. Each chronicler had his own version of events, eliding or presenting stories based on the convenience of how easily they would fit in pre-conceived molds of what Ma'ali and Khwaja Mu'azzam represented for him on the spectrum that ranged from a harmless trouble-monger, to just another rebel, to a mad villain who turned murderous. These transgressions had to be punished according to the intensity of rebellion. For authors like Fazl, not only political rebellion and overtly seditious behavior, but even the slightest sign of impudence or improper conduct was construed as wickedness and madness that needed to be castigated. In Mu'azzam's case, his harassment and murder of an innocent girl was an unforgivable crime that could only have resulted from his insanity. His delirious ramblings were not taken seriously. He had to be taken by force and threatened with drowning as a way of knocking some sense into the murderer before carting him off to prison in Gwalior. Even his immunity as Akbar's uncle could not save him from this fate.

But what did the rebels have to say for themselves? What were their motives, and did they ever pen their own thoughts? In this sense, the *Diwan-i Ghazali* (1570) represents a rare manuscript that records the voice of a rebel. It was written in rhyming verse by an Iranian poet named Maulana Ghazali, who was born in Mashhad in 1527. After briefly working at the Safavid court of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-76) and facing persecution in Iran, he left for India and entered Akbar's employ in 1559. He served under the governor of Jaunpur, Khan-i Zaman 'Ali Quli Khan, for several years before the latter's rebellion and eventual death in 1566-7. Ghazali was among the few members from 'Ali Quli's retinue who was recalled to Akbar's court in Agra, where he rose through the ranks and was bestowed with the title *Malik us-Shu'ara* ("King among Poets"). Four years later, as part of his *diwan* (poetic compilation), he included a verse-narrative of his disgrace in court, subsequent material and emotional distress, and plea to Akbar asking for restitution. Ghazali died in 1572 in Ahmedabad, where his chronogram was composed by his successor as the Mughal poet laureate, Faizi.²⁰⁴

The *Diwan-i Ghazali* is divided into nine sections, including samples of his ghazals, *qasidas* (odes) to Akbar, *masnavis* on Sufi mystical love, a diatribe against the 'ulema, satires on other *amirs* at the court, and most importantly for us, an explanation of his rebellion. The text begins with the following verses:

The delicacies of the meadow beckon ideas of perfection

نازکیهای حسن آنکه خیالات کمال،

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 218-9. "آن سفاک بیبیاک زبان بسفاهت و هذیان برگشاد..."

²⁰² "دریای غزب آن محبت عدالت در جوشش آمد..."

²⁰³ "مالیخولیا بر او زور آورد، و فساد دماغ از عالم رفت..."

²⁰⁴ Munibur Rahman, "Gazali Maṣḥadī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. X, Fasc. 4 (2000): 380-381; Salman Abbasi, *Ghazali Mashhadi: Hayat aur Karnama* (in Urdu) (Lucknow: Urdu Samaj Publishers, 1978); Charles Rieu, *Catalog of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. 2 (London: Dept of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, 1881), pp. 661-3.

But due to the strangeness of our times, it so happened
 [When I] was summoned with the aim of being enslaved
 [I was] driven to frenzy by the breeze of slavery...
 I am the Jami of India who could not become Khusrau
 Since step by step, I began running away from beauty
 You reduce the blackness that resides in the brain
 But I was incapable of realizing the worth of sensibility.²⁰⁵

اما ز غرایب زمان ما آن بود
 و بغایت مستعبد مینموده،
 که نسیمک غلام شوریده...
 من جامی هندم که بخسرو نرسیدم
 اما ز حسن یکقدم قدم بیش دویدم
 تو سیاه کم هاین که در دماغ دارد،
 لیکن چون قدر محسوس نداشت قابل.

These opening lines betray the purpose of the *diwan*: justifying Ghazali's insubordination to an intended audience that probably included the emperor himself. The meadow's delicacies refer to the lucrative advantages of being in Akbar's service, which should have ideally inspired the servant to be perfectly loyal. Instead, in Ghazali's case, becoming enslaved (*musta'bid*) had the opposite effect by fanning the fire of rebellion. Perhaps he felt suffocated or constrained by the bonds of imperial servitude, since becoming a slave (*ghulam*) led him to act in a frenzied manner (*shorida*). He then extols his own literary virtues by claiming to be an Indian equivalent of the famous Persian poet 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (*Jami-yi Hind*) but not as accomplished as Amir Khusrau. This poetic allegory could also be interpreted as his own assessment of his service to Akbar, where he tried his best to be a faithful servant but fell short of the expected standards. Beauty is a metaphor for fealty to the Mughal ruler, from which Ghazali through his years of employment became increasingly distanced. He acknowledges that Akbar (directly addressed here as "you"), as the fount of reason and justice, was usually instrumental in maintaining humoral balance in the servant's body by preventing the excess buildup of black bile in the brain – a reference to the root cause of insanity and melancholia in medical parlance. However, Ghazali was an exception to this norm. He blames his own shortcoming as an insensible and ungrateful recipient of Akbar's favors for not being able to keep his rebellious tendencies in check.

Ghazali then goes on to explain in the *Ganj-i Akbari* ("Treasure of Akbar"), one of the nine sections in the *Diwan-i Ghazali*, that when he started out in Mughal service in 1559, he was extremely proud to be counted among the servants of Akbar (*fakhr-i man ein ... ki az ghulaman-i Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar-am*). He was such a loyal servant that he became a *majzub* in his love for Akbar, intoxicated by a goblet of wine.²⁰⁶ *Majzubs* were Sufi saints whose direct attraction to God (*jazb*) led them to circumvent the ordained Sufi path and instead embrace madness. Moreover, his intoxication after the *sagi* (cupbearer) fills his goblet of wine is a metaphor for Ghazali's enjoyment from serving at Akbar's court.²⁰⁷ This hyperbolic adulation for Akbar was perhaps an attempt to overcompensate for his subsequent disloyalty. Both *majzub*-becoming and wine-intoxication were closely tied with madness, but this insanity was not that of a rebellious, irrational noble. Rather, Ghazali in this paean to his employer subverted the negative connotation of rebellious madness by substituting it with love-madness emanating from divine inspiration, which is especially relevant since Akbar in the early 1570s was in the process of fashioning himself as the *zill-i ilahi* (God's shadow on earth).²⁰⁸

In the last part of the *Ganj-i Akbari*, Ghazali wittily laments how his position at the Mughal court was threatened, leading to his deprivation, sorrow and madness:

²⁰⁵ *Diwan-i Ghazali* (London: British Museum, Or. Add. 25023), f. 2a.

²⁰⁶ *Diwan-i Ghazali*, ff. 22b-23a. "Since I am a *majzub* in love, *jazb* is in my nature/ since I am intoxicated, the *sagi* fills wine in my goblet." In Persian: "نه اگر مجذوب عشقم، زوست جذب فطرتم/ نه اگر مستم، ازان ساقیست می در ساغرم."

²⁰⁷ The connections between wine-intoxication and insanity were well-documented in the late sixteenth century. The famous poem *Saqinama* ("The Cupbearer's Book", 1595) by Nur al-Din Muhammad Zuhuri (1537-1616) contains several references to madness that I will discuss in the next chapter.

²⁰⁸ For older studies of Akbar's religious policies, his self-fashioning as the *zill-i ilahi*, and his religious path, the *Tauhid-i Ilahi*, see S.A.A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign, with special reference to Abu'l Fazl* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), and Makhanlal Roychoudhury Sastri, *The Din-i Ilahi or the Religion of Akbar* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta Press, 1941).

O God! This spirit trapped in the conquered fort,
 Seeks divine refuge till the Day of Resurrection.
 [I have been] near the king for three years,
 This spiteful talk comes from Turks and Tajiks.
 That Ghazali from Akbar Ghazi,
 Has received great comfort and honor.
 Apart from his friends and relatives,
 Desire pulled him in this direction.
 Before this my condition was not bad,
 This [accusation] caused me much shame.
 The nobles of the time close to his Majesty,
 Severed my water supply from up above.
 That prince of hearts was no doubt angry,
 My jagir was reduced by half.
 Either the eye of my destiny turned unlucky,
 Or the devil was telling me stories.
 Either he backed the wheel of my pleasure,
 Or the emperor was playing a joke on me.
 All my money and materials were taken away,
 The jagir of this slave was given to a Khwaja.
 By my side remained an old woolen shawl,
 My bone china turned into earthenware.
 Whatever horses I had remaining,
 I was burdened by their sickness.
 The horses in my stable were sad and suffering,
 Suckling dryly [like] horses on a chessboard.
 A weak horse branded with the name of Mani,
 Became emaciated like [the prophet] Mani.
 Like a captive spider, his ambitions ruined,
 An old man in sadness and boiling anxiety.
 From poverty, he couldn't face the three worlds,
 He held all the reins to his own head.
 That day his horseshoe closed without mercy,
 Since he had no bells [in] the lifeless sky.
 It was hidden that havoc flowed from my eyes,
 A string of honor in teary havoc, my body weak.
 My tears were not for the sake of wealth,
 My value as a special jewel was not clear to you.
 Gold and silver derived from that jewel of union,
 My jewel of tears was like silver, my face like gold.
 From my face [you] could tell all my burnt scars,
 The mirror of the sun was illuminated by my face.
 It is said that we sing from that cry of sadness,
 The blemish of madness has left a mark on my head.
 A few admonishing words from the blessed Kauser,
 Blessing is a lover's certainty, his lips my Kauser.
 Though we are apart, Ghazali seeks union on the road
 to Ka'aba, My truth as purpose becomes my guide.
 There is hope that on the Day of Judgment,
 The king, magnificent as heaven, will raise my rank.

یا رب این دیو بند قلعه گشای،
 باد تا حشر در پناه خدای
 پادشاه سه سال نزدیکست،
 کین سخن ذکر ترک و تاجیک است
 که غزالی ز اکبر غازی،
 یافت دلداری و سرافرازی
 شد جز دوستان و خویشان را،
 طمع این سو کشید ایشان را
 پیش از این بد نبود حالت من،
 گشت از این موجب خجالت من
 خاصه وقتی که کشید والا،
 آب ما را برید از بالا.
 ملک دل غصه را مسلم شد،
 نیمی از جاگیر من کم شد
 یا مرا چشم بخت شد خفته،
 یا خبیثی حکایتی گفته
 یا زد این نقش چرخ عیش نورد،
 یا شهنشه بمن مطایبه کرد
 نقد و جنسی که بود گشت تمام،
 جا گیرم خواجه گشت بنده غلام
 در برم صوف کهنه شالی شد،
 طرف فغفوریم سفالی شد
 ز آنچه ماندند اسپکی دارم،
 که بیمار او گرفتارم...
 نه که اسپوی طویله غم و رنج،
 خشک چوسی چو اسپک شترنج
 اسپ لاغر که زد رقم مانی،
 گشته او را بلاغری مانی
 عنکبوتی تبار حرص اسیر،
 در غم گاه و فکر جوشنده پیر
 از عدم سه نکرده عالم پیش،
 او کل افسار داشت بر سر خویش
 نعلش آنروز بست قاس مهر،
 که جلاجل نداشت خشک سپهر...
 شد نهان بس که کهر ریخت ز چشم ما،
 رشته سان در کهر اشک تن لاغر ما
 اشک ما تا نشود واسطه دولت قرب،
 بر تو ظاهر نشود خاصی گوهر ما
 زر و سیمی که توان یافت از آن گوهر وصل،
 گوهر اشک چو سمیست و رخ چون زر ما
 ما ز رخسار توان سوخت هایم که شد،
 روشن آینه خورشید ز خاکستر ما
 گفتن است که خوانیم باین داد غمت،
 پس که از داغ جنون نیست نشان بر سر ما
 چند و ایض سخن از طوبی کوثر گوید،
 طوبی ما قد یارست و لبش کوثر ما
 گرچه دوریم غزالی ز ره کعبه وصل،
 صدق ما جانب مقصود شود رهبر ما
 هست امید که تا روز قیامت گذرد،
 از فلک دبدبه شاه بلند افسر ما.

This long excerpt from his *masnavi* bears testimony to Ghazali's greatly aggrievement by his fall from grace in Akbar's eyes, when half his *jagir* was stripped away and given to a Khwaja. He was aghast at the allegation that he was taking advantage of his high rank as Malik-us-Shu'ara, promoting his own friends and relatives at the court. He blamed jealous Turks and Tajiks for poisoning the emperor against him by levying this unjustified claim. When he was subsequently deprived of his livelihood, his incredulity upon receiving the news of his demotion was such that he thought either Akbar was kidding, or "the devil was telling him stories" (*kehabisi hikayati gufta*). This was an indicator of madness by spirit-possession, where he tried to process his shock by imagining it couldn't be true; surely Satan was playing tricks on him. Ghazali then gives a humorously pitiful account of his impoverished state, cursing fate for the reduction in his material means, whereby his clothes, his crockery and his stable were all affected. He takes the metaphor of an emaciated horse to exaggerate his own misery and hopelessness. This hyperbolic description of himself as a sickly horse, a trapped spider and a wronged old man was clearly meant to evoke sympathy in the reader/ listener. Perhaps this *masnavi* was read out in open court in front of Akbar, hence imploring him to restore Ghazali to his earlier position. His sorrow and tears were lamenting the loss of his economic status, while simultaneously expressing his disappointment in Akbar for not recognizing his value as a special jewel (*kehasi gauhar-i ma*).

Ghazali's was therefore not an open act of rebellion, but more a covert critique of the emperor's judgment in believing maliciously motivated nobles enough to publicly humiliate Ghazali. Despite being an imperial servant, he asserts his own agency here, asking his employer to acknowledge his worth. His tears and loyalty were nothing less than gold or silver, and the insults he had had to bear were visible on his sun-illuminating face. Stripped of his dignity and honor, his grief-stricken cries (*na'la-yi gham*) gave way to insanity. Madness was therefore reappropriated by Ghazali as an extreme emotional state brought on by his political and financial circumstances. In this manner, Ghazali turned the Mughal rhetoric of insanity as a way of dismissing the rebel's consciousness on its head, instead employing it to express his own affective condition where the "blemish of madness" (*dagb-i junun*) left its mark on his head. He ends by exalting Akbar as Kauser, the sacred lake mentioned in the Qur'an. He wanted Akbar to restore his position, if not in this lifetime, then perhaps on the Day of Judgment after his pilgrimage to Mecca. This lip-service to Akbar accompanied Ghazali's subversion of the rhetoric of madness as rebellion.²⁰⁹

There were rare cases in court chronicles where madness was viewed as an ailment that needed to be medically treated. Such was the case of Shaikh Jamal Bakhtiyar recorded in the *Akbarnama*. Bakhtiyar was a noble in Akbar's army who, during an expedition in Khyber in 1581, was suddenly seized by black-bile-induced madness (*saudayi*), perhaps brought on by excessive drinking. Akbar asked him to not perform the *kornish* on account of his intoxication. He then became unsteady (*sabak-sari*) due to the excess of insanity (*nirangi-yi junun*), setting fire to his belongings and becoming a beggar due to his ignorance (*bi-danishi*). The emperor, out of his generosity and to teach Bakhtiyar a lesson, had him confined (*zindani gardanid*).²¹⁰ This confinement was thus supposed to be for the patient of madness to convalesce and not pose a threat to others around him. In Akbar's characteristic carrot-and-stick method of dispensing justice, the madman's punishment was also a sign of the emperor's kindness. In a time when there were no asylums, such incarcerations of the mentally ill were few and far between, usually decided by hakims, the patient's family or by royal decree. A similar case of madness (*saudayi*

²⁰⁹ These extracts from the *masnavi* "*Ganj-i Akbar*" are taken from *Divan-i Ghazali*, ff. 48b-50a. In his gloss of this *masnavi*, the cataloguer Charles Rieu comments that Ghazali's "remissness in attending court" led to him losing half his *jagir* around the time of Salim's birth in 1569. See Rieu, *Catalog of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol. 2, p. 662. While I agree with the timeframe he suggests, in my reading Ghazali does not explicitly mention his absences in court, rather citing the jealousy of Turks and Tajiks accusing him of promoting his relatives and friends by virtue of his closeness to Akbar as the main reason for his demotion.

²¹⁰ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 3 (1884), p. 381.

shudan) is recorded with Bakhtiyar's friend Shaikh Abdur Rahim of Lucknow, who kept bad company and fell into alcoholism (*ba bada-nushi uftad*). In 1585, he was in the chamber of Hakim Abu al-Fath Gilani when, due to the tumult of insanity (*az shorish-i junun*), he suddenly grabbed the *hakim's* dagger and stabbed himself. *Hakims* stitched his wound and tried to resuscitate him. After two and a half months, they were about to give up on Abdur Rahim when Akbar prescribed a muskmelon mixed with camphor (*palush-i kharbuzā*) that speeded his recovery.²¹¹

Akbar's suggested treatments for madness notwithstanding, there is a marked paucity of Mughal *tibbi* manuscripts from this period. The two major medical treatises over these sixty years (c. 1545-1605) were Jurjani's *Zakhira-yi Nizam Shahi* and Firishta's *Dastur al-Atibba*, both composed in the Deccan. Aside from an Arabic commentary on Avicenna's "Canon of Medicine" (*Sharh al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*) by Hakim 'Ali Gilani in 1593, the only surviving medical text from Akbar's court is *Khulasa-yi Hakim Binai*, a text on therapeutics written by Bina bin Hasan Hakim Hasani in 1587. His father had been a physician, while his son Shaikh Hasan Hassu became a renowned elephant doctor under Jahangir and was given the title of Muqarrab Khan.²¹² By 1595, Badauni notes that the temperament of this distinguished doctor and skilled surgeon, whom he refers to as Hakim Bina Sirhindi, had become senile (*kharafat bar mizaj-i ou rah yafta*).²¹³ The *Khulasa* was a translation from Sanskrit and Hindavi treatises on Ayurvedic medicine, and its section on madness is titled "On the suffering of *unmada*, meaning *divanagi*". It mentions various kinds of insanity and their accompanying remedies. In the first kind of madness, the patient experienced hallucinations and paranoia, and became wary (*nigahdar*) of water, fire, trees, hills, chakras, and wells. The reference to chakras connotes a possible yogic or shamanic ritual associated with spirit possession. To cure this, Hakim Bina recommended consuming aged Brahmi extract (*shira-yi brahmi-yi sahiq*) mixed with honey. A second kind of madness (whose symptoms are not mentioned by Hakim Bina) could be treated by drinking *dasmol*, a concentrate made from boiling ten herbs together, along with consuming ghee (*roghan-i-mada-yi gav*, literally "oil made from a mother-cow"), listening to the sound of a Persian dulcimer (*santur*), and rubbing mustard oil (*roghan-i sarsaf*) inside the nose and all over the body. For a third kind of madness, Hakim Bina prescribes taking equal quantities of ginger, pepper, rock salt, sesame seeds (*tukhm-i saras*), rice grains, and white mustard mixed with chamomile (*babul*). In moderation, this concoction cured fever, especially vaporous fever (*tap-i bukhari*), and the wind of epilepsy and insanity (*bad-i sara' wa unmad*).²¹⁴

Given these stories of rebellious nobles, mentally ill patients and medical prescriptions for insanity in his reign, did Akbar himself ever go mad? Since Fazl idolized him as the fount of reason and rationality,²¹⁵ it is ironic to find stories of the Mughal emperor himself (like Murtaza Nizam Shah) being accused of insanity in some sources. He was supposedly afflicted with epilepsy (*sar'a*) and bouts of depression in his youth.²¹⁶ Others claim that he experienced episodes of temporary madness. On a hunt in Bhera, Punjab in May 1578, for example, the *Dalpat Vilas* reports that Akbar became extremely angry after a few Rajput nobles failed to attend his *darbar* on time, causing one of them to even commit suicide afterwards. According to the Rajasthani source, this shocking outburst of rage was followed by the emperor's "raving" (*bakai*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

²¹² See Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, "An Aristocratic Surgeon of Mughal India: Muqarrab *Khān*," in *Medieval India 1: Researches in the History of India, 1200-1750*, ed. Irfan Habib (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 154-167.

²¹³ Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, Vol. 3, p. 169.

²¹⁴ *Khulasa-yi Hakim Binai* (London: Wellcome Collection, Persian Mss 601, copied by Ali Akbar Vald-i Jalil in 1878), ff. 65-66.

²¹⁵ On Fazl's ideals of reason and rationality, see Harbans Mukhia, "A Rationality Immersed in Religiosity: Reason and Religiosity in Abu'l Fazl's Oeuvre," *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2020): 50-73.

²¹⁶ John F. Richards states, unfortunately without a footnote: "The emperor suffered from a recurring spiritual and personal crisis. At times he was subject to trances which were probably a mild form of epilepsy. Signs of chronic depression were also reported by observers close to him." See Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, No. 5, Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 34.

chai). Akbar is said to have blasphemously suggested that Hindus should eat beef and Muslims pork, cut his own hair, and finally set all the animals captured on the hunt free. This absurd behavior, as Cynthia Talbot notes, was an indicator of Akbar's mental instability for the author of the *Dalpat Vilas*: "A prolonged period of royal rage had deranged the emperor and transformed him into something different (*aur rup buya*)."²¹⁷ Another incident occurred a few years later when Akbar introduced bizarre policies while celebrating the Islamic millennium in 1582. He made heretical claims about discovering proof for metempsychosis, allowed wine to be officially sold near the palace, habilitated prostitutes on the outskirts of the capital in a new place called Shaitanpura (Devilville), encouraged shaving beards for Muslim men, kept swines and dogs in the harem, suggested ablutions before sex, made wearing gold and silk mandatory, celebrated Zoroastrian festivals, instituted the solar calendar, forbade Islamic prayers, fasting and pilgrimage, and cultivated the knowledge of astrology, astronomy, philosophy, poetry, history and epics at his court over and above religious texts and learning Arabic. Both the Portuguese Jesuits visiting Fatehpur Sikri and Badauni opined that these actions were signs of the king's insanity.²¹⁸ These episodes connote a growing skepticism among Akbar's critics about his ability to govern as an equanimous, just Islamic ruler, and unlike Fazl, they had no qualms in deploying the label of madness to explain the monarch's aberrant behavior.

The Madwoman in the Attic

The label of madness was used to dismiss the agency of not just political rebels, but also madwomen who dared to challenge unspoken patriarchal norms. This leads us to ask: how did the discourse of madness as rebellion work in a gendered context? Specifically, what stories do the Mughal sources tell about women who suffered from insanity? How and why were women who perpetrated social transgressions labelled mad? Did they ever manifest any medical symptoms of insanity, or was this simply an effort to castigate them for their egregious conduct? Were women ever able to feign madness as a way of getting what they wanted?

The second volume of Badauni's *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* narrates a long story of two lovers, Sayyid Musa of Garmsir, one of the chief Sayyids of Kalpi, and Mohini, the wife of a Hindu goldsmith, in A.H. 976 (1568-69 CE). Musa set his eyes on Mohini one day in Agra, and they both fell in love with each other. As their attraction grew, Musa took up residence near Mohini's house in Agra, "... and his affairs tended to madness" (*karish ba-junun kashid*). One night Musa sneaked into her house and they eloped. When Mohini returned to her house after three days, her relatives locked her up in a room, while Musa took on the title of "Disgraced" (*rusva*). Badauni writes,

*Alas! That love was again drawn to madness,
The line of insanity crossed over the book of wisdom.
The first quill that the beloved ran over the elegant page,
Drew the line of madness over the letter of her friend.*²¹⁹

دردا! که عشق بارش بدیوانگی کشید،
خط جنون بدفطر فرجهانگی کشید.
اول کلم که بر ورق ناز راند یار،
بر حرف آشنا خط دیوانگی کشید.

Here, we see how madness was deployed as a marker of extreme love that led to supposedly irrational acts. The different terms for insanity (*divanagi*, *junun*) reflect an opposition to wisdom, and a close link with overpowering love. Mohini and Musa went against social conventions to not only begin living near each other, but also by eloping.

²¹⁷ Talbot, "Anger and Atonement in Mughal India: An alternative account of Akbar's 1578 hunt," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (2021): 1-48, esp. p. 31.

²¹⁸ A. Azfar Moin, "Badauni's Critique: The Millennial 'Madness' of King Akbar" in "Ch 5: The Millennial Sovereign: The Troubled Unveiling of the Savior Monarch," *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 152-5.

²¹⁹ Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, Vol. 2 (1595), p. 113.

Mohini and Musa concocted a plan to elope again, making it as far as Bayana, a town at some remove from Agra. But Mohini's relatives caught up with them and took her back, while Musa was briefly incarcerated and remained separated from Mohini. Once he was back in Agra, he asked a *qazı* (judge) friend of his to whisk Mohini away on a horse and bring her to him. The *qazı* did so, but midway Mohini changed her mind, asking him to convey to Musa that their union was not fated. When Musa heard this, he shut himself in Agra Fort and possibly committed suicide (although the details of this are not explicitly revealed in the text). Mohini was witness to his bier being carried under her window, and her grief was boundless.

... the chain broke from her foot. Like a mad person (*divanawar*), with arms and feet naked she ran direct to the resting place of that traveler, who never tasted the joy of union. Her demeanor changed from time to time, sometimes silent, at other times crazy (*gahi khamosh wa gahi madhosh*) ... And after that a total derangement and confusion (*ikhtalafi wa ikhtalali-yi tamam*), which occurs in the pulse of persons on the point of death, became apparent in her. Whether in motion or rest, every moment like one mad and at war with herself (*saudayan ba khud dar jang*), she would sit in a corner disconsolate, beating her breast with a stone ... [eventually] she recited the confession of Islam, cast herself on the dust of her pure lover, and surrendered her soul to her beloved.²²⁰

We must be attuned to the specific articulations of madness in this account, the different terms for madness, and their varying connotations. Mohini was a *divanawar* when she frantically freed herself and ran to her lover's grave. Her fluctuating moods were described as fluctuating between quietude and *madhosh*, a term that can mean intoxicated, senseless as well as the translation here, crazy. "*Ikhtalafi wa ikhtalali-yi tamam*" captures the extent of her madness: a totalizing, all-consuming insanity from which there was no coming back, a state of complete contrariety and incongruity (*ikhtalaf*) combined with tumult and confusion (*ikhtalal*). In this conflicted state, madness (*saudayan*) lent her the hysterical strength to be at war with herself, the last stage before death as she "cast herself on the dust of her pure lover".

This account of Mohini's grief, her increasing insanity, and her subsequent death (possibly suicide) can be compared to the earlier madness ascribed to Musa. The two kinds of insanity, both non-normative and unconventional, differ in their tone, temperament and perception. One was madness arising from the boldness of a Hindu woman's extramarital affair with a Muslim noble, and the public scandal caused by their multiple failed attempts to elope together. The other was madness associated with mourning and severe depression at the loss of a loved one, which stung even more because that love was unrequited. Perhaps one of the main reasons why Badauni records this story, and why this story was controversial, was because a married Hindu woman had dared to subvert patriarchy and monogamy in her love for another man, a Muslim one at that. This is not to suggest that cross-religious unions were rare by any standards; the development of the Mughal-Rajput relationship, as is well-documented, began through marital alliances in precisely this period of the 1560s and 1570s.²²¹ But marriages that did not have social or political sanction were uncommon, a rarity that was compounded by the inter-religious aspect. These factors probably contributed to Badauni's characterization of Mohini's

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117; translation (1925), pp. 120-121.

²²¹ See, among others, Frances Taft, "Honor and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal-Rajput Marriages" in Karine Schomer et al. (eds.), *The Idea of Rajasthan Vol. II* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994); Norman Zeigler, "Some Notes on Rajput Loyalties in the Mughal Period," in JF Richards (ed.), *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ramya Sreenivasan, "The 'Marriage' of 'Hindu' and 'Turak': Medieval Rajput Histories of Jalor," *The Medieval History Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2004): 87-108; Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power* (2005); Cynthia Talbot, "Justifying Defeat: A Rajput Perspective on the Age of Akbar," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 55, No. 2/3, *Cultural Dialogue in South Asia and Beyond: Narratives, Images and Community (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries)* (2012): 329-368; and Sabita Singh, *The Politics of Marriage in Medieval India: Gender and Alliance in Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019).

state as a grief-stricken madwoman whose rebellion and transgression of social conventions only served to augment her insanity.

We must also be cognizant of the Indo-Islamic literary tropes of lovesickness born from the pain of separation from a loved one. In narrating this story of Mohini and Musa, Badauni was not necessarily factually accurate. Mohini's madness and suicide on her lover's grave bore testimony to Amir Khusrau's ghazal two and a half centuries before this:

*In love, there is none as mad as a Hindu woman
It's not every moth that can burn in a dead flame.*²²²

چون زن هندو کسی از عاشق دیوانه نیست
سختن در شم سوخته کار هر پروانه نیست.

The theme of a Hindu-Muslim extramarital union was further inspired by Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat*. Written in 1542, this Awadhi Sufi romance (*premakhyān*) dealt with the forbidden love between Alauddin Khalji, the fourteenth-century Sultan of Delhi, and Rani Padmini, the Rajput princess of Chittor.²²³ Quite possibly, Badauni also embellished his tale of love-madness based on Persianate legends like *Layla-Majnun* and *Yusuf-Zulaikha*, which were copied on Akbar's command in the Mughal atelier.

The most enduring and popular Persian work that established the literary trope of love-madness was Nizami Ganjavi's *Layla wa Majnun*, which was part of his *Khamsa* (Quintet) compiled in 1188.²²⁴ When Qays falls for Layla in the Arabian desert, people call him Majnun, literally meaning madman but also implying one possessed by a spirit (*jinn*). After being forbidden from meeting Layla, he disappears into the wilderness of the desert. Layla reciprocates Majnun's love despite their separation, and claims to be "madder, more Majnun than a thousand Majnuns". Layla and Majnun meet one last time before Layla's death. Majnun dies soon after and is buried next to her.²²⁵ The *Layla wa Majnun* saga has a long subsequent history in South Asia. The most popular account of the tale was Amir Khusrau's *Majnun-o-Layli* (1299). The Layla-Majnun legend was widely read and reproduced in Mughal India, including several illustrated manuscripts at Akbar's and Jahangir's courts, while Shah Jahan fashioned himself as a second Majnun after Mumtaz Mahal's death in 1631.²²⁶

Perhaps more than *Layla wa Majnun*, Mohini's madness at her lover's death was inspired by *Yusuf wa Zulaikha*, written by the fifteenth-century Herati poet 'Abd al-Rahman Jami as part of his *Haft Aurang* ("Seven Thrones", 1485), which also contains his own version of *Layla wa Majnun*. Jami retells a famous Qur'anic story by juxtaposing the trope of Majnun's madness for

²²² See Shantanu Phukan, "None as Mad as a Hindu Woman": Contesting Communal Readings of *Padmavat*," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1996): 41-54; Mohammad Wahid Mina, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau* (Lahore: Punjab University Press, 1962), p. 42.

²²³ See *ibid.*; Ramya Sreenivasan, *The Many Lives of a Rajput Queen: Heroic Past in India, c. 1500-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

²²⁴ There are many English translations of this legend, like R. Gelpke, *The Story of Layla and Majnun* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd, 1966) and Dick Davis, *Layli and Majnun* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2020).

²²⁵ For various discussions of this legend and the legacy of Majnun, see As'ad E. Khairallah, *Love, Madness and Poetry: An Interpretation of the Majnun Legend* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1980); André Miquel and Percy Kemp, *Majnun et Layla: L'amour fou* (Paris: Sindbad, 1984); Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 158-73; Michael W. Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 313-339; and Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness, and Mystic Longing in Nizami's Epic Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

²²⁶ See H. Pinder-Wilson, "Three Illustrated Manuscripts of the Mughal Period," *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 2 (1957): 413-422; Barbara Brend, *Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami* (London: British Library, 1995); and Ebba Koch, "The Mughal emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus, or the Album as a Think Tank for Allegory," *Mugharnas*, Vol. 27 (2010): 277-311. Mughal manuscripts of *Layla-wa-Majnun* are housed, among other places, in the British Library, London (IO Islamic 384 and Or 12208, ff. 169v-230v), and the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Pers. D 102 and Ms. Douce 348).

Layla with Zulaikha's madness for Yusuf, her slave.²²⁷ This is a crucial gendered inversion that reveals the manifest differences between the insanity-inducing effect of excessive unrequited love on male and female protagonists. Zulaikha is a princess who sees repeated dreams of Yusuf and goes mad in her love for him, even ordering her servants to find his likeness in the real world, but he remains elusive. She then marries the Vizier of Egypt, and one day, upon passing through a bazaar and seeing Yusuf as a slave for sale, buys him. She spends her days adoring and taking care of Yusuf. As Zulaikha's physical yearning for Yusuf grows, so does her madness – she even tries to seduce him, but unsuccessfully. While the Vizier dies and Yusuf becomes the next Vizier of Egypt, Zulaikha grows haggard and, much like Majnun, wanders through the wilderness pining for Yusuf. One day Yusuf hears Zulaikha crying, has her brought before him, and after seeing her maddened state, finally gives in and agrees to physical relations with her, but only after they get married. The popularity of *Yusuf wa Zulaikha* was spread across the Persianate world, including South Asia. Illustrated manuscripts of this tale as well as Jami's *Baharistan* (*The Land of Spring*, 1487) were commissioned at the Mughal court under Akbar's patronage. Sunil Sharma has analysed the widespread artistic appeal of the Yusuf-Zulaikha story, while Muzaffar Alam has studied the circulation of Jami's texts in an Indo-Persian context.²²⁸ Zulaikha exemplifies the figure of the madwoman, at once a vampish seductress and a sympathetic lover. Her rebellion lay in expressing her lustful desire for Yusuf, a slave who kept rejecting her advances. Yet she remained undeterred and strove to win him over, even after their fortunes were reversed. This social transgression became the most obvious sign of her madness, just as Mohini's elopement and posthumous lovesickness for Musa confirmed her insanity.

Indeed, the notion of lovesickness (*ishq*, the same word for love) as a form of insanity was described in medical treatises of the time. The *Dastur al-Atibba* ("Rules for Physicians", 1590), also known as the *Ikhtiyyarat-i Qasimi* ("Selections of Qasim") was written for the Adil Shahi ruler of Bijapur by Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Firishta, the same author as the *Tarikh-i Firishta*. Based on Ayurvedic medicine, it begins with twenty chapters on diseases of the head, of which chapters 13 and 14 are worth noting here.²²⁹ The thirteenth chapter states that melancholia was an expression of madness (*diwanagi*) and black bile-induced insanity (*saudayi*). The humor of black bile became dominant in the brain, stomach, liver and spleen, and narrowed the cognitive faculty (*qunwat-i mutafakkura*). The fourteenth chapter on lovesickness (*ishq*) and madness (*diwanagi*) notes that every time the lover turned their face to thoughts of separation from the beloved, it connected with the temperament of the brain (*mizaj-i dimagh*). Indeed, the entire body searched for a path to madness, and black bile was produced. Since the nature of black bile was dry, everything that overlapped in the body lasted for a long time. Therefore, when the patient fell into thoughts of the beloved, they could not abruptly come out of this reverie. The text mentions various treatments for curing lovesickness and madness, including administering drops of violet oil (*roghan-i banafsha*) in the ear and nose, eating special foods that were also considered beneficial for melancholia, bathing frequently, and keeping the heart busy

²²⁷ The standard translation is Ralph T.H. Griffith, *Yusuf and Zulaikha: A Poem by Jami* (London: Trübner and Co., 1882), while a more recent although still dated one is David Pendlebury, *Yusuf and Zulaikha: an allegorical romance by Jami* (Ishk Book Service, 1980).

²²⁸ Sharma, "Approaching Jāmī through Visual Culture: The Popularization of Yūsuf-Zulaykhā in Persianate Societies," pp. 42-62, and Alam, "Scholar, Saint, and Poet: Jāmī in the Indo-Muslim World," pp. 136-176, in Thibaut D'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (eds.), *Jāmī in Regional Contexts: The Reception of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th-14th/20th, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section One: The Near and Middle East, Vol. 28* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018).

²²⁹ The other chapters range from headaches and migraines to paralysis, cerebral palsy, vertigo, encephalitis, apoplexy, epilepsy, insomnia, nightmares, forgetfulness, nictations, tremors and spasms. See Firishta, *Dastur al-Atibba* (New Delhi: Hakim Muhammad Saeed Library, Jamia Hamdard University, no. 2111), ff. 69a-76b. The sections on melancholia, lovesickness and madness are on ff. 74a-b. See also the short description of this text on the Perso-Indica website that mentions another copy of the *Dastur al-Atibba* in Tehran (Majlis Library, pers. 5521/1): http://perso-indica.net/work/dastur_al-atibba.

in acts of welfare. Firishta ends the section with the observation of several physicians that love bereft of union with the beloved (*'ishq-i bi-visal-i ma'shuq*) never did any good. As a mental illness, then, lovesickness affected both men and women, a fact that is also borne out by contemporary Mughal poetry.

Faizi's *Nal-Daman*, which was completed at Akbar's court in 1594, purports to tell an Indian version of *Layla-Majnun*. Faizi's *masnavi* was a Persian translation of the Sanskrit tale of Nala and Damayanti, where Faizi stressed the importance of equilibrium. Love (*'ishq*) was desirable but only in moderation, and its excess needed to be prevented since it could only lead to loss of reason (*'aql*). In this sense, as Alam and Subrahmanyam have argued, one of the primary contrasts that Faizi sets up is between love (*'ishq*) and insanity (*junun*). The first section of the *masnavi* sees Nal, the ruler of Ujjain, afflicted by lovesickness.²³⁰ He describes his symptoms in an increasingly medical manner, that causes his mental illness to gradually escalate from headache (*dard-i sar*) to encephalitis (*sarsam*) to full-blown insanity (*junun*):

*I don't know from where this lovesickness has arisen,
For every vein and fiber of my being is troubled.
What fever causes the boiling in my liver?
The pulse of my heart is agitated...
The heart trembles so much that eventually,
My headache has turned into encephalitis...
What has emerged in my head is insanity,
Look at me if it hasn't become a furnace.*²³¹

این عشق ندانم از کجا خاست،
کز هر رگ و ریشه ام بلا خاست.
جوش جگر من از چه تاپست،
در نبض دلم اضطرابست...
دل لرزه کنان که چون سرانجام،
درد سر من گشت به سرسام...
پیداست که در سرم جنون یست،
بر من بدید اگر فرن نیست.

His doctors are then called to cure him. After consulting with his ministers, he learns of the legendary beauty of Daman, the princess of Bidar. He realizes that she is the source of his illness. In similar fashion, Daman hears of the brilliant and handsome Nal. Her attack of lovesickness is considered scandal-worthy due to her gender, and her parents worry what their subjects will think of the princess. But this does not stop her from going into a frenzied state thinking about Nal. This is a different kind of lovesickness from Badauni's account, since here it is brought on by thoughts of the beloved before their actual meeting and blossoming of love, while in the case of Mohini and Musa their madness was a result of their separation after failed elopement. After a love-letter arrives from Nal, Daman is ecstatic; her response invokes the passion of love-madness (*junun*):

*Greetings to Nal from Daman,
Your message has stolen my heart.
That letter, which was a journal of insanity,
Was written with musk like an enchantment.
A hundred enchantments seized my intellect,
[And] increased the tumult of my insanity.*²³²

به نل از دامن سلامی،
دزدیده بسوی دل پیامی.
کان نامه که دفتر جنون بود،
از مشک نوشته چون فسون بود.
بر عقل رمید صد فسونم،
افزود کشاکش جنونم.

The tone of Daman's insanity changes here, since she represents it not as a mental illness but rather as a passionate fire that was exacerbated by Nal's letter. Hence, madness becomes a means

²³⁰ See Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Ch 5: Faizi's *Nal-Daman* and Its Long Afterlife," in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 204-48; Muhammad Taiyib Siddiqui, *Masnavi-yi Nal-Daman-i Faizi: Tabqiq wa Tadwin* (Patna: The Art Press, 1987); Z.A. Desai, "Nal Daman of Faidi," *Indo-Iranica*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1958): 43-56; Desai, "The Story of Nala-Damayanti as Told by Faidi and its Comparison with the Original Sanskrit Version" (in 2 parts), *Journal of the Oriental Institute (Baroda)*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1958): 81-96, No. 2 (1958): 183-98.

²³¹ Siddiqui, *Masnavi-yi Nal-Daman-i Faizi*, p. 163.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 215.

for her to express the intensity of her longing, rather than an affliction that holds her back. This is followed by Nal's arrival in Bidar and their meeting that leads to marriage. After going back to Ujjain, Nal indulges in pleasure and passion with Daman so much that he neglects his stately duties. As a result of this disequilibrium, he experiences the tumult of insanity (*shorish-i junun*). He gambles away his kingdom to his younger brother and is forced to go into exile. Faizi thus reinforces the need for balance and observes: "when love and insanity join together, it begets a storm of misery from sadness"²³³

Madness arising from women's breach of prescribed gender boundaries was sometimes weaponized to their own advantage. That is, they sometimes went to great lengths to prove that they were indeed insane, if that meant their supposed misdeeds might be overlooked or clarified. Early examples of this include stories of the concubine Maywa-jan faking a pregnancy for twelve months in Humayun's harem in 1531, and the Bhakti saint Mirabai (d. 1547) claiming to be mad in her love for Krishna, described in my first chapter.

In this sense, we have a remarkable Mughal painting of the daughter-in-law of the king of Banaras feigning insanity in a story from the *Tutinama* ("Tales of the Parrot"). This was initially a Persian adaptation of the twelfth-century Sanskrit *Sukasaptati* ("Seventy Tales of the Parrot"), part of the *katha* (storytelling) tradition. The *Sukasaptati* was first translated into Persian at Alauddin Khalji's court in Delhi under the title *Jawahir al-Asmar* ("Jewels of Nocturnal Conversations") in 1312, and later as *Tutinama* by Ziya al-Din Nakhshabi (d. 1351), who lived in Badaun and followed the Chishti saint Farid al-Din Nagauri.²³⁴ *Tutinama* was copied under Akbar and lavishly illustrated by his court painters 'Abd al-Samad and Mir Sayyid 'Ali in the early 1560s. These are among the earliest Mughal paintings, with another copy made in c.1580.²³⁵ The legend revolves around the figure of Khojasta, a merchant's wife who wants to have an affair while her husband is away. She has a pet parrot who keeps telling her stories late into the night to prevent her from going out and meeting other men. In the story of the sixteenth night, the parrot advises Khojasta on what to do should her secret be exposed, so that she won't have to face humiliation or disgrace (*badnami-o-nakami*).²³⁶

The parrot starts telling the story thus: The son of the king of Banaras was ugly looking with an abominable personality, dripping stupidity and ignorance. He adds: "foolishness is such an affliction that no skilled doctor can cure it."²³⁷ When the son grew up, he married the daughter of another king. She was beautiful, elegant, observed *purdah*, and was proficient in music. With this ill-fated union of a devil (*div*) and a fairy (*pari*), the wife soon realized that she was trapped in an unhappy marriage. She was sitting one day on the roof of her home when she heard a mesmerizing voice singing. The song was such that the listener became intoxicated and

²³³ "چون عشق و جنون برهم برآید، طوفان بلا از غم برآید." See *Ibid.*, p. 235.

²³⁴ Nakhshabi authored a wide range of texts aside from the *Tutinama*, including the *Silk al-Suluk* ("The String of the Sufi Path"), the *Chahal Namus* ("Forty Ethical Principles"), the *Sharh-i Qasida-yi Suryani* ("Commentary on the Syriac Ode"), the *Lazẓat-un-Nisa'* ("Pleasures of Women"), and the *Ratirahasya* ("Mysteries of Sex"), a Hindi translation of the Sanskrit *Kokashastra*. See Mohammad Karimi Zanjani Asl, "Ziā'-Al-Din Naḵṣabī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2000); Sajidullah Taffimi, "Shaykh Diya al-Din Nakhshabi: His Life and Persian Works," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct 1983): 256-79; and Sonia Wigh, "Contour and Classify: Sexual Categorizations in Early Modern South Asia," in Imre Bangha and Danuta Stasik (eds.), *Literary Cultures in Early Modern North India: Current Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), pp. 279-320.

²³⁵ While the 1560 *Tutinama* illustrations are all in the Cleveland Museum of Art, a slightly later version (1580), also from Akbar's court, can be found in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. The original story of the sixteenth night is revealed in *Tutinama*, Cleveland Museum of Art, Persian Mss No. 1962.279, ff. 117a-123a.

²³⁶ *Tutinama* (Cleveland mss), f. 117b. See also Francis Gladwin (ed. and trans.), "Tale the Tenth: The Merchant's Daughter and the Jackal," in *The Tooti Nameh, or Tales of a Parrot: in the Persian Language* (London: J. Debrett Institute, 1801), pp. 69-72; Pramod Chandra, *The Tūṭi-Nāma of the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Origins of Mughal Painting* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u Verlagsanstalt, 1976); and Muhammad Simsar, *The Cleveland Museum of Art's Tūṭi-Nāma: Tales of the Parrot by Ziya u'd-din Nakhshabi, English translation* (1978). I thank Sonia Wigh for bringing this painting to my notice.

²³⁷ "حماقت علتی است که آن را هیچ طبیب حاذق علاج نتواند ساخت." See *Tutinama*, f. 118a.

senseless (*mast-o-madhosh*), like someone unconscious after consuming opium (*afyun*). Looking down, she saw a young boy on the other side of the wall. She decided to surrender her intellect and wisdom (*'aql-o-kehira*) to the owner of that melodious voice. She climbed down to meet him and complained about being married to a fool, claiming that “intimacy with a dog is better than intimacy with a foolish man”.²³⁸ She requested the young singer to help her run away. They had only gone a few miles ahead when they came across a river. The singer offered to swim with her possessions and come back to help her cross. She wanted to rest for a bit and fell asleep. Thinking to himself that he was a beggar and she a princess, the boy stole her jewelry and ran off before she could wake up.

When the woman came to, she realized what had happened and became distraught. Standing alone on the bank of the river, she was approached by a jackal (*shagil*) who dropped the bone he was carrying and went after a fish. Another animal came and snatched away his fish before he could react. The princess laughed upon watching this. The jackal asked her who she was and what had happened. The princess narrated how she had abandoned her husband in pursuit of a young male singer, who escaped with her material belongings. She had given up what she had in order to go after something new, in the process losing both. She asked him for advice on how she should face her husband and father-in-law at home. The jackal said:

You should trick them by making yourself a madwoman. Tear your clothes, don't cover your head, go barefoot and give the appearance of insanity. Thus, everyone who sees you in that condition will excuse you, thinking this poor wretch has gone mad. Once your insanity is firmly etched in people's hearts, gradually regain your composure and slowly collect yourself.²³⁹

The painting below bears out how the daughter-in-law followed the jackal's advice to the tee upon returning home. Her hair is askew, her clothes are torn, and she is pointing to her head as though something is wrong. She seems out of place and disoriented, acting the part of a madwoman to hide the evidence of her true whereabouts. Perhaps the figure sitting in front of her with a female attendant is her father-in-law, the king of Banaras. He is the only male in the painting, since women peer out from windows above to see the commotion. There is a possible person between the daughter-in-law and the king who has been overpainted.²⁴⁰

This story in the Mughal *Tutinama* is a commentary on the adulterous woman who was able to justify her misadventures by faking madness. The opening frame narrative between Khojasta and her parrot sets up the premise of how a woman could conceal her deceit if caught. The answer to this becomes apparent by the end of the daughter-in-law's story. The language of the entire anecdote is laced with snide remarks on loss of intellect, starting with the husband's idiocy and ignorance. The music of the young boy rendered people senseless, while the princess willingly gave up her rationality to run away with him. After he cheated her and she met the jackal comes the *pièce de résistance*. The jackal counselled her to trick her in-laws, indicating the power of madness to subvert social norms and help women recover their agency. The act of appearing insane was manifested through her dishevelled attire, lack of *purdah* even though she was known to be usually veiled, and no footwear. She was able to fool her husband and in-laws

²³⁸ "الفت سگی بهتر است از الفت آدمی لحق" See *Tutinama*, f. 120a.

²³⁹ See *Tutinama*, f. 122a. In Persian:

"حیلۀ تو آنست که خود را دیوانه سازی و جامه پاره کنی و سر و پای برهنه و بر هیات اهل جنون به خانه روی تا هر که تو را در آن حالت ببند معذور دارد، و بگوید مسکین دیوانه شده است، چون جنون تو در دل خلق متمکن شود، بعد از آن بتدریج خود را گرد آر و باهستگی فراهم شو."

²⁴⁰ John Seyller, "Overpainting in the Cleveland Tūtināma," *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 52, No. 3/4 (1992): 283-318; Anand Krishna, "A Reassessment of the *Tuti-Nama* Illustrations in the Cleveland Museum of Art (and Related Problems on Earliest Mughal Paintings and Painters)," *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (1973): 241-268.

into thinking she was actually mad, so that her escape could be excused. Madness gave her the license to act more freely. Despite her circumstances with her insipid husband and the male singer's scam, she managed to assert her independence. The princess's rebellion was constituted both by her running away and by her return as a pretending madwoman. Having thus established her insanity, she could slowly fade back into sanity without raising any suspicions.

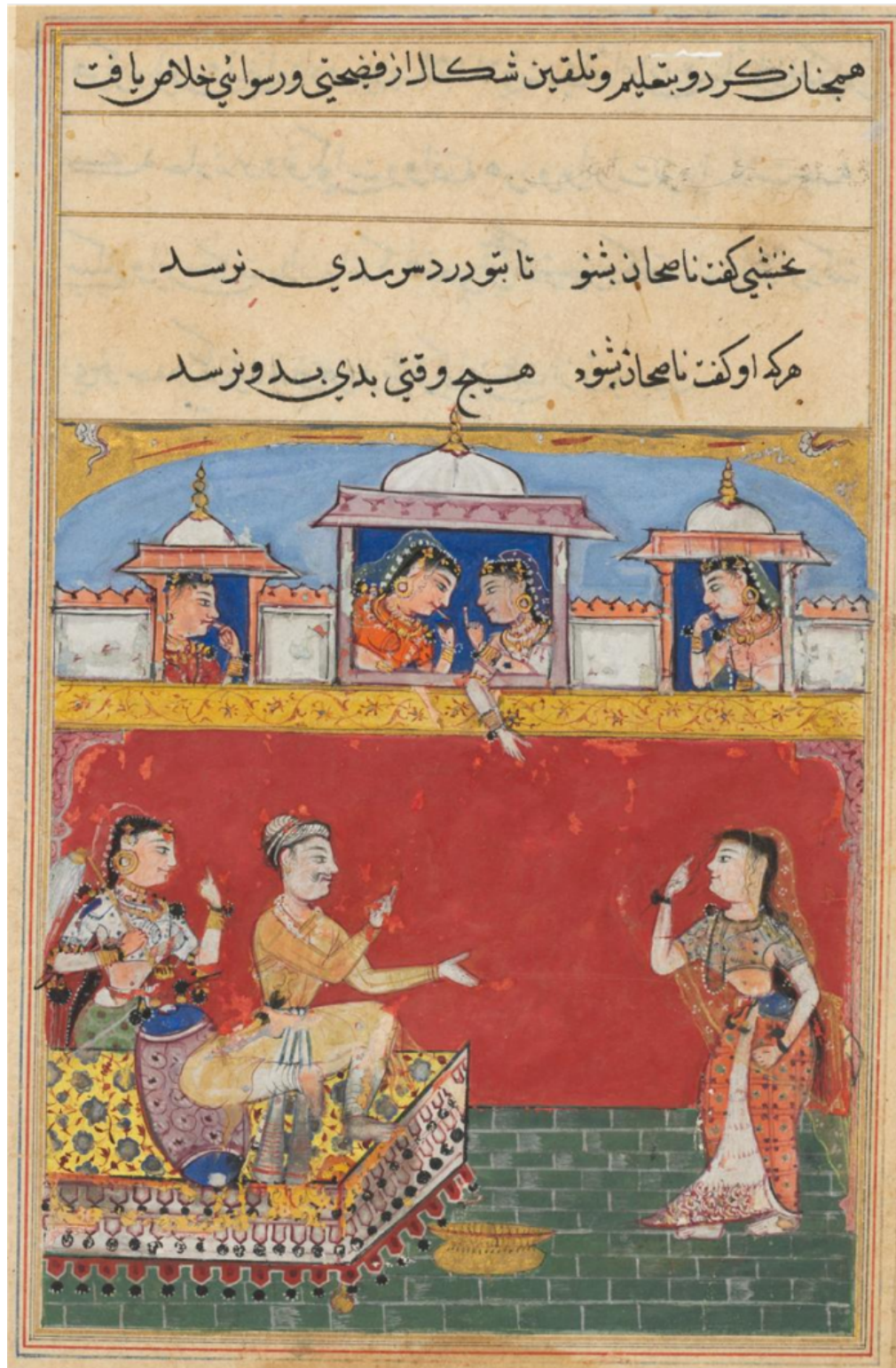


Figure 8. "The daughter-in-law returns from her misadventure, feigning insanity"
f. 122b, Sixteenth Night from *Tutinama* (Tales of a Parrot), c. 1560, Mughal India
Gift of Mrs A. Dean Perry, © Cleveland Museum of Art, No. 1962.279

Even as the parrot reinforces social conventions by refusing to condone her actions, he reluctantly admits the genius of her plan and advises Khojasta to follow similar measures should her infidelity be revealed. One can also imagine, given the wide circulation of the *Tutinama*, how men and women in South Asia reading or listening to this story of a woman feigning insanity would have reacted.

To understand the agency imbued in the figure of the rebellious madwoman in Mughal India, we may turn briefly to feminist literary criticism, especially as it developed around the character of Bertha Mason in the classic Victorian novel, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). On the day of Jane's wedding to Mr. Rochester, she discovers that he is already married to a "madwoman", Bertha Mason, who stays in the attic of the house during the day and occasionally roams around at night. Jane then leaves the house and returns to Thornfield a few years later, only to find it razed to the ground in a fire started by Bertha Mason, who then jumped off the roof and committed suicide.²⁴¹ Bertha is thus wicked, scheming and unpredictable, the antithesis of Jane, who is the embodiment of goodness and purity. In 1966, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* retold the story from the perspective of Bertha Mason.²⁴²

Taking this forward, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* views the figure of Bertha Mason as a recurring literary trope in Victorian literature, whereby female authors like Brontë who struggled to find their place as professional writers in a male-dominated field could assert their freedom. In this sense, Bertha Mason was "Jane's truest and darkest double ... the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress."²⁴³ But given the male-centric literary dichotomy between the angelic and demonic woman, the madwoman could only ever be the latter, a monstrous villain antithetical to patriarchy-approved models of ideal womanhood. It was precisely through occupying this antithetical space that the madwoman experienced liberation and subverted patriarchy. Thus, the figure of the madwoman could become an empowered female who expressed her freedom and rebellion by appropriating madness, precisely that device meant to control and cage her. The madwoman in the attic, then, can be employed as a metaphor for female rebellion and agency in early modern South Asia where insanity was a means for women to wriggle out of difficult situations and sometimes augment their own freedom. The purpose is not to romanticize her suffering, but rather to point out that madness could be as much a way out of her troubles as it was society's way of dismissing her. Mohini, Zulaikha, Daman, and especially the princess in the *Tutinama* story were all able to exert some amount of autonomy by deploying the label of madness to alleviate their misery. Whether historical or mythical, it is encouraging to surmise that the stories of these "mad" characters inspired hope for many women in Mughal India.

IV Princess Manbhawati Bai's Suicide (1605)

Finally, we encounter a different kind of madness that led to suicide, this time in the royal family itself. On May 5, 1605 in Allahabad, a few months before Akbar's death, his son the soon-to-be fourth Mughal emperor Jahangir's first wife, the Rajput princess Manbhawati Bai (titled Shah Begum), committed suicide by consuming opium. Her brother Madhav Rao had misbehaved with Jahangir, and her seditious son Khusrau was ignoring her pleas to not rebel against his father. One might be tempted to read Manbhawati's suicide in political and gendered terms, as a manifestation of her male relatives' imperial disloyalty. But Jahangir's own writing puts these events in perspective by alluding to her fragile mental state:

Several times, her temperament came into tumult. It must have been a hereditary trait,

²⁴¹ Charlotte Brontë (aka Currer Bell), *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1847).

²⁴² Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: André Deutsch, 1966).

²⁴³ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 360.

since her father and brothers would suddenly express their madness, but after a while they would calm down. At the time when I was busy hunting, on 26th Zu al-Hijja, 1013 A.H. [corresponding to May 5, 1605], she consumed a lot of opium due to her frenzied brain. In a little time she passed away, almost as though she had preempted her ungrateful son's behavior.²⁴⁴

Jahangir's awareness about his wife's predisposition for madness (*divanagi*) and tumult (*shorish*) underscores a broad medicalized understanding of her mental illness. This history of madness in her family, together with the stresses of her brother and son's disloyalty towards her husband, was explained as the reason for her suicide by ingesting opium (*tiryak*). Jahangir did not describe his ungrateful son (*pisar-i bi-daulat*) Khusrau's insurrection, or his brother-in-law Madhav Rao's misdemeanor, as acts of insanity. Rather, their madness was expressed through their impact on Manbhawati Bai (or Man Bai)'s health and composure. This idea of hereditary mental illness was a novel conception that does not find a parallel in medical manuscripts, but was clearly prevalent enough for Jahangir to note his wife's inheritance of madness from her male relatives.

Man Bai's father Raja Bhagwant Das was the ruler of Amber. His sister Mariam-uz-Zamani had married Akbar in 1562; thus, her niece's marriage to her son Salim carried on the tradition by cementing ties between the Kachhwaha and Mughal royal families. Bhagwant Das and his father Bara Mal commissioned the Jama Masjid in Lahore,²⁴⁵ while Man Bai's brother Raja Man Singh (1550-1614) was among the highest-ranking nobles under Akbar. For Jahangir to then say that his wife's illustrious Rajput family had a history of madness is significant. As it turns out, he wasn't casting aspersions on her heritage without proof, since Abu al-Fazl explains Bhagwant Das's descent into madness (*sandayi shudan*). In April 1586, Akbar had commanded both Bhagwant Das and Man Singh to go from Punjab to Zabulistan (Afghanistan) to fight the Yusufzai clan. But Bhagwant Das expressed "improper desires" (*khwahish-hayi bi-hanjar*), which the emperor understood to mean madness (*divanagi*), and thus forbade him from going. Eventually Bhagwant Das apologized and requested to go to Kabul. Upon his departure, he crossed the Indus and set up a temporary camp (*serai*) in the town of Khairabad. After a few days of attending to military duties, "the jewel of his wisdom became dark" (*ganhar-i kehirad tira shud*). He became quarrelsome, dizziness overcame his head (*asima-sar gardanid*), and he had to be brought to Attock where physicians took care of him. As a doctor named Saman was taking his pulse, Bhagwant Das suddenly pulled out his dagger (*jamdhar*) and stabbed himself. This attempted suicide caused much alarm and Akbar immediately asked Bhagwant's family to choose from among four physicians for his treatment. Hakim Mahadev oversaw Bhagwant Das's recovery from his stab wound and mental illness. It took a long time, but eventually the Rajput regained his strength. The same month, his granddaughter Sultan-un-Nisa Begum was born to Man Bai and Salim.²⁴⁶

This pattern of attempted suicide as a result of madness was thus repeated by Bhagwant Das's daughter nineteen years later, unfortunately succeeding this time. Jahangir was still a newly married teenager when his father-in-law went mad and stabbed himself, leaving an indelible impression on his young mind. When his wife had a similar bout of insanity and committed suicide on the eve of his accession in 1605, he probably experienced déjà vu and hence mentioned that the hereditary transmission of madness from father to daughter may have led her

²⁴⁴ *Jahangirnama* (Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, DS 461.5), p. 27. In Persian:

"چندین مرتبه گاهگاهی، مزاج او در شورش می آمد. چنانچه این حدیث میراثی بود که پدر و برادران او همه یکبار دیوانگی خود را ظاهر می کردند، و بعد از مدتی علاج پذیر می شدند. در ایامی که من به شکار متوجه بودم روز بیست و ششم ذی حجه سنه ۱۰۱۳ افیون بسیار در عین شورش دماغ خورده. در آنک زمانی در گشت، گویا که این احوال پسر بی دولت خود را پیشتر می دیده است."

²⁴⁵ This is mentioned in the *Zakhirat al-Khawanin* (1650), a later account of Mughal nobles. See Syed Moinul Haq (ed.), *Dhakirah al-Khawanin of Shaykh Farid Bhakkari (Persian Text)*, Vol. 1 (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), p. 103.

²⁴⁶ *Akbarnama*, Vol. 3 (1884), pp. 491-3.

to an early grave. We do not have corroborating evidence for either Madhav Rao or Man Singh displaying signs of madness. The circumstances of her son and brother's rebellion accelerated her depression, but consuming opium (*tiryak*) was the final nail in Man Bai's coffin. She thus chose a less violent death than her father's decision of stabbing himself with a dagger.

To this end, opium and more generally drug addiction was also closely linked with insanity across the early modern Persianate world. Hakim 'Imad al-Din Shirazi's *Risala-yi Afyun* ("Treatise on Opium", 1591), a Safavid manuscript on the effects of opium, documents that even though it was beneficial for headaches (*sada*) and other minor ailments, when consumed in excess its soporific effect could cause hallucinations (*tawabhum*), encephalitis (*sarsam*), oblivion (*lisarghis*), insanity (*junun*) and even death. The author was writing this text by combining his medical knowledge with his personal experiences as an opium addict in sixteenth-century Iran. The text's appearance in Indian archives suggests its circulation in the Mughal Empire as well.²⁴⁷

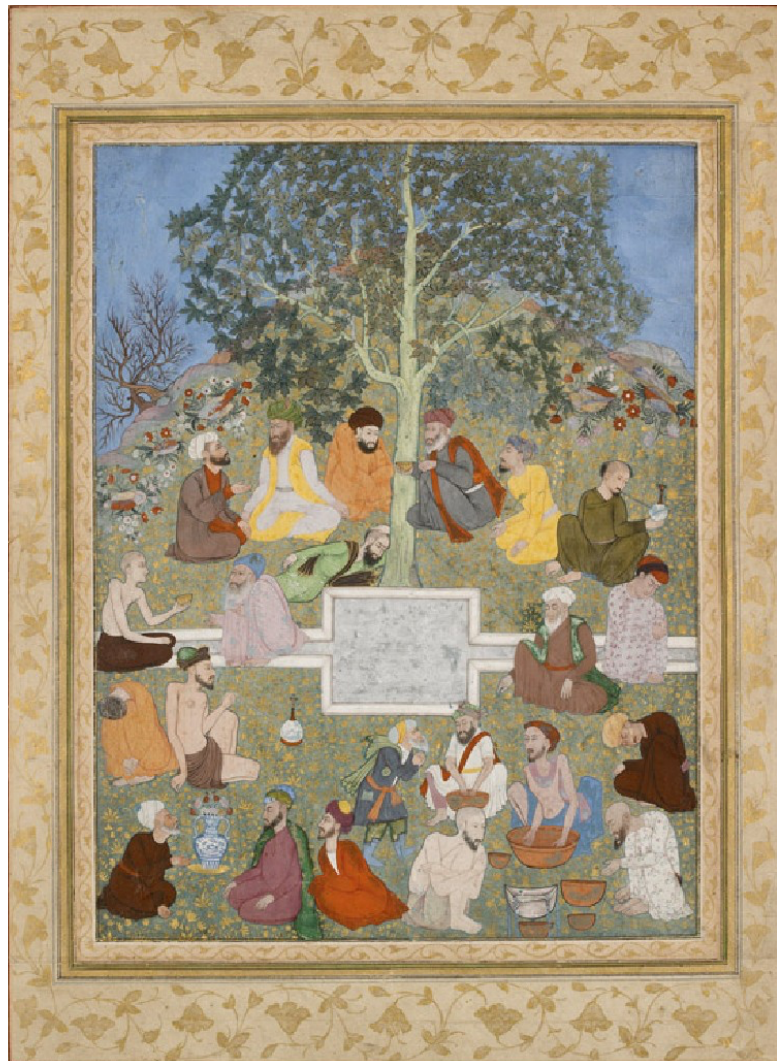


Figure 9. Gathering of dervishes and drug addicts, c.1610
© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

²⁴⁷ See Shirazi, *Risala-yi Afyun* (New Delhi: Hakim Muhammad Saeed Library, Jamia Hamdard University, Mss. No. 1964), ff. 15-26; Ranin Kazemi, "Doctoring the Body and Exciting the Soul: Drugs and consumer culture in medieval and early modern Iran," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (2020): 554-617; Emilie Savage-Smith, "'Emād-al-Dīn Maḥmūd,'" *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 4 (1998): 381-382; and Hakim Syed Zillurrahman, "Hakīm 'Imāduddīn Shīrāzī," *Studies in History of Medicine and Science* Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2 (1985): 15-21.

Along with opium, cannabis (*bhang*) was closely associated with an altered mental state that could produce madness. This was especially common among Sufi dervishes and other holy men, whose substance abuse was excused on grounds of their higher metaphysical state, mediating their access to an alternative divine reality. In the Mughal painting above, a chinar tree provides shade to an assembly of Hindu and Muslim mendicants sitting around a channel of water. Men in the foreground appear to be concocting *bhang* in porcelain and earthen pots for consumption by their peers. Three figures in particular display the visible effects of this intoxicant: the person on the left in orange robes rests his head on his knees, apparently dozing off; the man in the center in green robes and a white turban, who is reclining against the tree with a faraway gaze in his eyes; and the man on the right, in brown robes, whose head appears lopsided.

Clearly, the insanity in Man Bai's case was far from a rebellious or emancipatory epithet, being the medical diagnosis of her fatal suffering. Much like the court painter Daswanth whose images in the *Razmnama*, *Tutinama* and *Hamzanama* give some indication of his disturbed mental state,²⁴⁸ Manbhawati Bai too took her psychological suffering to the precipice of suicide. Ironically, Jahangir had her tomb constructed by the famous architect Aqa Riza in 1606 in Allahabad. It is located in Khusrau Bagh, named after her son, whose rebellion had agitated her madness and pushed her over the edge, who was later buried with her in 1622.²⁴⁹

Conclusion

If the first chapter showcased a growing medical knowledge about madness and other mental illnesses, in this chapter I have highlighted the proliferation of scientific terminology about brain disorders in political and gendered contexts. Madness in court chronicles was deployed as a cudgel mostly in cases where actors were disloyal to the emperor. In stringing together anecdotes about insanity from imperial histories like the *Tarikh-i Firishta*, *Akbarnama* and *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, among others, my central argument is that madness was a label meant to trivialize the rebel's motives and intentionality, thus negating their consciousness in deciding to disobey or go against the emperor, the fount of reason. Their defiance of authority ran the gamut from a symbolic absence to organizing a large-scale insurrection to violence, murder or suicide. This hegemonic imperial discourse was not without its pitfalls, since sometimes emperors like Murtaza Nizam Shah would themselves act in irrational ways, while rebels like Shah Abu al-Ma'ali and Ghazzali could subvert the category of madness to their advantage, manipulating it to amplify their resistance.

These "weapons of the weak"²⁵⁰ were even more evident when madwomen engaged in social transgressions and broke patriarchal conventions. Lovesick women in Mughal India, both real and fictional, were likely to appropriate insanity as a tool for expressing liberation and union with the beloved. As the story in the *Tutinama* bears out, their rebellion could also be orchestrated by feigning insanity to explain their misdemeanors, thus giving them greater agency. And yet, some of these madwomen were truly suffering from mental illness, which could be hereditary. The thread that ties these stories of gendered unreason together with political irrationality is their shared understanding of madness highlighting an anti-establishment attitude of non-conformity during the reign of Akbar.

Taking forward the literary inflections of madness witnessed here, the next chapter will focus on the notions of demonic possession, wine-intoxication, lovesickness, and other forms of unreason in the poetic writings of courtiers, Sufi saints, Persian scholars, and Mughal princesses in seventeenth-century South Asia.

²⁴⁸ See the opening anecdote in the Introduction to this dissertation.

²⁴⁹ Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, The New Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, No. 4 (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), pp. 104-5.

²⁵⁰ I borrow this term from James C Scott's famous anthropological study of rural uprisings in a Malaysian village, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

Chapter 3: Madness as Poetic Unreason **Wine-Intoxication, Literary Reformulation and Sufi Wisdom, 1595-1690**²⁵¹

Muhammad Salih *Divana* (lit. “madman”, d.1600) was a poet at Akbar’s court, whose story is recorded by two Mughal chroniclers, ‘Abd al-Qadir Badauni and Nizamuddin Ahmad. Badauni’s *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* mentions that Akbar conferred the title of ‘*Aqil* (wise or sagacious) on him, although he had a burning obsession with painted idols (*sukhta-yi musawwar-i mujassim*), of which Badauni clearly disapproved. The madman wanted five or six meats to be thrown into a river or fountain as an offering to the Prophet Khizr before sitting down to eat daily. He sent a boy to perform this errand every morning, an Indian servant by the name of Qasim. Qasim would find some Sufi *qalandars* to eat the food, and upon returning, lie that he had carried out the deed and seen the prophet, who had consumed the meats with relish and asked him to convey his blessings to Salih. The *divana*, in his innocence, easily believed this lie. Salih, a respected courtier in Fatehpur Sikri, was later reprobated (*mardud gashta*) and departed for Kabul. When he was invited to come back as the trustee of Nizamuddin Auliya’s *dargah* in Delhi, he refused and remained in Kabul.²⁵²

Nizamuddin Ahmad’s *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, by contrast, states that Salih’s father ‘Allami had been Humayun’s official librarian (*kitabdar*), so that Salih grew up as Akbar’s childhood companion. He later left the court and resided in Kabul, where he was happy and content with a stipend and other gifts. Salih wrote poetry under the penname *Farighi* (lit. one who is free, released from obligation), and four verses from his *divan* attest to his literary potential:

*In my madness for her curls, my feet are chained,
In the mirror of black bile, my plan is to give up life.
My mad infatuation for that fairy keeps me insane,
From madness, oh wise ones! I am bound by chains.*²⁵³

سودای سر زلفش بپا افکند زنجیرم،
درین سودا بغیر از جان سپردن نیست تدبیرم.
مرا سودایی آن پری دیوانه میدارد،
ز سودایی، ای عاقلین! دربند زنجیرم.

This account of Salih the Madman raises many questions. What kinds of behaviors were thought to constitute madness among poets in Mughal India? How did insanity become a predominant theme in early modern Indo-Persian poetry, and why was it significant in the self-fashioning of these writers? What were the religious, political, social and philosophical undertones to this literary deployment of lovesickness and madness? How were earlier tropes of unreason and irrationality redefined to satisfy the poetic tastes of a South Asian audience over the course of the seventeenth century?

In seeking to answer these questions, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first begins with a detailed study of Zuhuri’s *Saqinama* (“Song of the Cupbearer”, 1595), a Deccani *masnavi* on the close association of wine-intoxication with madness, altered states of mind, spirit possession, music therapy, and lovesickness. By interspersing my analysis with anecdotes from contemporary court chronicles, descriptions in medical and occult texts, and visual representations in Mughal art, I argue that alcohol-induced irrationality and insanity complemented each other in an early modern Islamicate milieu. In the second section, I demonstrate how love-madness especially in the Layla-Majnun legend was transcreated and adapted to seventeenth-century Indian cultural environs in multiple literary manuscripts from the reigns of Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1628-58), enabling a distinctly Indo-Persian poetic

²⁵¹ I am grateful for Sunil Sharma’s insightful feedback on this chapter.

²⁵² Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, Vol. 3 (trans. Sir Wolsley Haig, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1925), pp. 362-3; Persian text, *Jild-i Sivum* (ed. Maulvi Ahmad Ali, Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar wa Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 1379 S.H./2000), p. 180. See also Bindraban Das Khushgu’s *Tazkirat al-Shu’ara*, 1735 (Bodleian Library, Oxford: Ms. Elliot 400), f. 163b; and Ahmad Ali Khan Hashmi of Sandiloh’s *Makhsuz al-Gharab*, 1803 (Bodleian Library, Oxford: Ms. Elliot 395), f. 229a. Both these later poetic anthologies contain a brief biography of Muhammad Salih Diwana.

²⁵³ Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, Vol. 2 (trans. Brajendranath De, Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1936), p. 740.

style to emerge. Some poets also used *Divana* or *Majzub* as titles in their work to indicate their predisposition to madness. The third section undertakes a close reading of Bedil Dehlavi's *Tilism-i Hairat* ("Talisman of Wonder", 1669) to suggest an affective, philosophical comprehension of the possible catalysts for madness. Bedil offers a uniquely empathetic ontology of mental illness by describing what went on inside the madperson's brain as they navigated their inner tumult and mental confusion, which needs to be understood in its socio-political context. And lastly, I turn to the Sufi poetry of two Mughal princesses, Jahanara and Zeb-un-Nisa, as well as the former's Qadiri *pir* Mulla Shah Badakhshi, to understand spiritual madness as a path of wisdom that brought together extant literary tropes with wine-intoxication, lack of rationality, and divine connection. Zeb-un-Nisa's *Divan-i Makhfi* ("Memories of the Veiled One", 1690) exemplifies a culmination of Indo-Persian poetic trends of insanity unfolding over the preceding century.

Inebriation, Jinn Possession, and Insanity in Zuhuri's *Saqinama* (1595)

Nur al-Din Muhammad Zuhuri (1537-1616) was a Persian poet from Turshiz in Iran who emigrated to the Deccan, first to Ahmednagar in 1580 and then to Bijapur in 1596. During his service at the Ahmednagar court, especially to Burhan Nizam Shah II (r. 1591-5), he composed many notable works of poetry, including odes (*qasidas*), narrative poems (*masnavis*), quatrains (*rubai's*) and strophes (*tarji'band*).²⁵⁴ His most famous work, however, is the *Saqinama* ("Song of the Cupbearer"), completed in 1595. One major section of this text details the effects of wine-intoxication in a Sufi-inspired literary mode that experimented with familiar themes in Persian poetry like the lover and beloved, the moth attracted to a burning flame, the pain of separation, and the cupbearer (*saqi*)'s role in alleviating this grief. Sunil Sharma has shown how Zuhuri's *Saqinama* located these metaphors in a Deccani context by eulogizing his Nizam Shahi patron, describing the built landscape and gardens of Ahmednagar, and bringing together the tavern (*meikhana*), courtly assembly (*majlis*), and marketplace (*bazaar*).²⁵⁵

Zuhuri was building on and intervening in an emerging Persian literary tradition of *saqinamas* through the sixteenth century. As Paul Losensky argues, this new *saqinama* genre drew inspiration from Nizami and Hafez's poetry. Safavid poets deployed the trope of wine-drinking by blending elegiac styles with courtly epics, didactic literature, and lyric romances. In Mughal India under Jahangir, two poetic biographical compendia (*tazkiras*) – Taqi al-Din Awhadi Balvani's *'Arafat al-'Ashiqin* ("The Holy Mountain of Lovers", 1615) and 'Abd al-Nabi Qazvini's *Maikhana* ("The Wine-Tavern", 1619) – delineated the emergence of *saqinamas*, emphasizing the pivotal role of Hakim Partuvi Shirazi's *Saqinama* (1520) in cementing the topoi of this genre.²⁵⁶ In this early *saqinama*, Shirazi made allusions to insanity, inebriation and excessive love:

*Since there is no rest in the world of rationality,
Give me the world of senselessness and insanity.
Like the intoxicated black eyes of the beloved,
Let me settle my own affairs with drunkenness.*²⁵⁷

چو در عالم هوش نبود سکون،
من و عالم بیخودی و جنون.
دهم همچو چشمه سیاه مست یار،
سرو کار خود را بمستی قرار.

²⁵⁴ His contemporaries like Firishta and Tabatabai extolled his literary skills in their chronicles. Another contemporary of Zuhuri was Malik Qummi, who later became his father-in-law and moved with him to the 'Adil Shahi court in Bijapur. See Paul Losensky, "Zuhūrī Turshīzī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition* (2012); C.H. Shaikh, "Literary Personages of Ahmadnagar," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4 (June 1941): 383-396; and Mana Kia, "Ch 3: Place-Making and Proximity" in *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), pp. 76-96.

²⁵⁵ Sharma, "Ch 8: The Nizamshahi Persianate Garden in Zuhūrī's *Saqinama*", in Emma Flatt and Daud Ali (eds.), *Garden and Landscape Practice in Pre-colonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), pp. 159-71.

²⁵⁶ Losensky, "Vintages of the *Sāqi-nama*: Fermenting and Blending the Cupbearer's Song in the Sixteenth Century", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2014): 131-157. See also Sharma, "Hāfiz's *Sāqinama*: The Genesis and Transformation of a Classical Poetic Genre," *Persica*, Vol. 18 (2002): 75-83.

²⁵⁷ Qazvini, *Tazkira-yi Maikhana* (1619), ed. Ahmed Gulchin Ma'ani, revised edn. (Tehran: 1988), p. 129.

In my analysis of Zuhuri's *Saqinama*, however, I will argue that his expressions of madness and allied mental illnesses in conjunction with wine-intoxication, senselessness, and irrationality were novel and did not merely replicate earlier poetic trends. Rather, they pushed the envelope for early modern South Asian discussions on alcohol inducing an altered state of mind that challenged normative bounds of reason. This paved the way for a philosophical debate on the lines separating sanity from insanity, simultaneously continuing to draw on Persianate tropes of lover and beloved. It was no coincidence that Zuhuri reached Ahmednagar during the reign of Murtaza Nizam Shah (r. 1565-88), who as we know from the previous chapter was given the title *Divana* ("Madman") for his erratic behavior and political instability. Perhaps partly drawing on his impressions of Murtaza, Zuhuri in his *Saqinama* deftly combined the Layla-Majnun legend with Sufi imagery, ethical comportment (*adab*), and contemporary medical and occult knowledge to explore the psychological impacts of excessive drinking. By thus contextualizing his Persian poetry in the Deccan at the turn of the seventeenth century while being cognizant of the scholarly conventions he followed and reinvented, we can glean insights into a specific literary-historical moment of connections between alcohol consumption, lovesickness, and unreason.

Consider the following verses in Zuhuri's *Saqinama* opening a story (*dastan*) about separation from one's beloved, driving the lover to inebriation and self-indulgence:

*The fire of longing gathers and rises high such,
That the sun sustains an injury in its breast.
It brings from Hind the memory of the elephant of insanity,
Tauntingly it draws the demon from the dye of blood.
Just as a half-separated candle darkens reason,
So too does my work with this liquid narrow reason...
Since the collar of lovesickness stings like a lancet,
The ailment of reason knocks at the door.
Since love casts its shadow on [my] head,
A melancholic desire forms in [my] head...*²⁵⁸

چنان شوله شوق گردد بزن،
که خورشید گردد سینه گزند.
ز هند آورد یاد پیل جنون،
بطعنیان کشد کوهه نیل خون.
چه بیم باین شمع تاریک عقل،
چه کارم باین آب باریک عقل...
مگر بیخه عشق نشتر زند،
که بیماری عقل بر در زند.
مگر سایه عشق بر سر فتد،
که از سر تمنای افسر فتد...

Zuhuri begins by describing the intensity of burning zeal for the beloved that has the power to scorch even the sun. This flame of passion (*shola-yi shauq*) reminds him of the elephant of madness (*yad-i pil-i junun*), invoking a popular animalistic trope about the intoxicated elephant (*fil-i mast*) in the South Asian context. Since Zuhuri was writing in Ahmednagar, he refers to "Hind" or Hindustan, north of the Vindhya and thus geographically separated from the Deccan,²⁵⁹ as the source of this madness. The psychological desperation of unrequited love stirs a demonic presence that is blood-red, much like the color of wine, highlighting the possibility of *jinn* possession under alcoholic influence. This innocuous liquid (hence the pun on *ab*, which could also mean water) occludes the lover's faculty of reason, whose light becomes dimmer like a half-covered candle. The Sufi metaphor of a burning candle hints at the irresistibility of wine despite knowing how it addles one's senses.

The direct connection between wine-drinking and loss of reason is worth teasing out. Zuhuri writes how the stinging sensation of lovesickness (*'ishq*) causes rationality to be diseased (*bimari-yi 'aql*), suggesting a descent into madness. The shadow of love only augments the brain's

²⁵⁸ My reading is based on a manuscript copy of the *Saqinama* in London, Nur al-Din Muhammad Zuhuri, *Ash'ar-i Zuburi* (I.O. Islamic 763, British Library, London), f. 151b, copied by Darvish ibn Muhammad Salih in 1704 in Kashmir. I am aware that the BL manuscript differs substantially from the printed edition by 'Ali 'Asghar Babasalar (Tehran: University of Tehran, 2015).

²⁵⁹ Here, I am reading Hindustan as covering modern-day north India, Pakistan, eastern Afghanistan, and Bangladesh – roughly the extent of the Mughal Empire in the last decade of Akbar's reign. For more on Hindustan as a region distinct from the Deccan and Carnatic in contemporary sources, see Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

torment as it is afflicted with a despondent wish (*tamanna-yi afsur*). Zuhuri was perhaps aware of contemporary medical knowledge like Firishta's *Dastur al-Atibba* ("Rules for Physicians", 1590), written in 'Adil Shahi Bijapur, or Hakim 'Ali Gilani's *Sharh al-Qanun* ("Commentary on Avicenna's Canon", 1593), written in Mughal Agra,²⁶⁰ which discussed *afsur* or depression as a symptom of melancholia and other serious mental disorders. Indeed, Gilani was known to have manufactured his own wine, *sharbat-i kaifnak* (lit. "ecstatic syrup"), mentioned in the *Jahangirnama* as a cure for exhaustion. On his son Khurram's twenty-fourth birthday in January 1616, Jahangir gave him permission to drink wine since it was customary for princes and monarchs to do so, while at the same time warning him about the perils of excessive drinking. Citing Avicenna and other physicians, he stated that grape-wine (*sharab-i angur*) had to be drunk in moderation since it caused loss of reason (*zayil-i 'aql*). Ironically, in the next passage Jahangir notes his own struggles with excessive 'araq drinking. His hangovers (*khumar-ha*) got worse and he developed tremors (*ra'sha*), with his hand shaking so much that he could no longer hold the wine-cup. Finally, he heeded warnings from his court physicians and advisors to reduce his alcohol consumption by gradually substituting it with philonium (*falunia*) and opium (*tiryag*).²⁶¹ It was unacceptable for a Mughal emperor or prince to not be in equilibrium,²⁶² since their bodily well-being represented the overall health of the empire. Hence, curbing Jahangir's alcoholic indulgence was crucial for not only preventing his crossover to unreason but also keeping his imperial sovereignty intact.

The next verses in *Saginama* solidify this relationship between inebriation and mental instability by carrying forward the theme of demonic possession:

*Since your love emanates out of devilish opposition,
Reason is a weaver that knits a Satanic whispering.
What quality does this wine-soaked reason bring,
Since the cupbearer brings a goblet of love?*²⁶³

مگر عشقت آرد برون از خلاف،
که عقلست جولاه و سواس باف.
چه کیفیت این عقل خام آورد،
مگر ساقی عشق جام آورد؟

Zuhuri points to the accursed nature of love that emerges from the forces of opposition (*kehilaf*), which in a religious sense connote devilish intentions. They take control of the poetic narrator's mind, making reason complicit in justifying the desire to drink more wine. The imagery of reason as a weaver stitching together a Satanic whispering (*waswas*) evokes the dulling of rational senses, allowing wine to command the narrator's actions.

Although usually mentioned in Islamic contexts as Satanic distractions from the pure faith, *waswas* was also referenced in contemporary Deccani medical manuscripts as a legitimate mental illness closely associated with insanity and melancholia. For instance, Firishta's *Dastur al-Atibba*, which was ostensibly based on Ayurvedic prescriptions, mentions Satanic whispering as a reason for nightmares (*qabus*). Firishta was perhaps building on the description of *bhutvidya* ("science of spirit possession") in the Lodi-era Ayurvedic text *Tibb-i Sikandari* (1512) discussed in my first chapter. According to the *Dastur al-Atibba*, the jinn haunting the brain was thought to cause insomnia (*bi-kehwabi*) and restlessness (*hararat*), possibly leading to epilepsy (*sar'a*), apoplexy (*sakta*) and madness (*divanagi*).²⁶⁴ Moreover, a slightly later Unani pharmacopoeia also from the

²⁶⁰ See my Chapter 2 for *Dastur al-Atibba*'s description of melancholia, lovesickness, and madness. The *Sharh al-Qanun* was written in Arabic; see SA Husain, "Hakeem Ali Gilani: A Commentator of Canon of Medicine," *Bulletin of the Indian Institute for History of Medicine*, Vol. 27 (1997): 47-52.

²⁶¹ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Muhammad Hashim (Tehran: Chapkhana-yi Zar, 1980), pp. 118-9; Wheeler M Thackston, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 184-5.

²⁶² There were, of course, notable exceptions to this rule since Mughal princes like Daniyal (1572-1605) and Parvez (1589-1626) died of alcohol poisoning. In Daniyal's case, delirium tremens set in when his father tried to restrict his access to alcohol. He died a few months before Akbar. Alcohol addiction was understood to be deeply tied with the onset of mental illness, and Jahangir perhaps feared a similar fate for himself and his sons.

²⁶³ *Ash'ar-i Zuhuri*, f. 151b.

²⁶⁴ Firishta, *Dastur al-Atibba* (No. 2111, Catalogue of Medical Manuscripts, Jamia Hamdard Library, New Delhi), f. 73a.

Deccan discusses various herbal concoctions for curing *waswas*. Hakim Taqiuddin Muhammad bin Sadruddin ‘Ali’s *Mizān al-Taba’i-yi Qutb Shahi* (“Scales of Medicine of Qutb Shah”, 1620), commissioned by Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah in Golconda, notes how different electuaries (*ma’juns*) like *sutira*, *harmas* (named after Hermes or Jupiter), *abi silami*, and *yaqut* (lit. ruby) were considered beneficial for patients of epilepsy, migraines, cerebral palsy, paralysis, vertigo, insanity, and Satanic whispering. It cites earlier Unani treatises like Ibn Sina’s *al-Qanun* (1025) and Haji Zain al-Attar’s *Ikhtiyarat-i Badiyi* (1368) as medical precedents in prescribing some of these potions,²⁶⁵ while the rest were probably the *hakim*’s own innovations for treating *waswas* and other mental illnesses based on trial and error.

Like these Deccani *tibbi* manuscripts, Mughal texts also addressed various cures for jinn possession. Firoz Jung Jahangirshahi aka Hakim Amanullah Khan Amani, the son of Mahabat Khan, wrote the *Dastur al-Hunud* (“Rules of the Hindus”, 1633), a Persian pharmacopoeia that was an adaptation of the Sanskrit Ayurvedic treatise *Madanavinoda* (1375).²⁶⁶ It mentions various Indian flowers, herbs, and concoctions beneficial for mental patients. For instance, smelling the Asian pigeonwings flower (*aparajita*) was helpful for those gripped by spirits and demons (*asib-i jinn-o-div*). Adding the seed of the akarkara plant (*beej-i akar*) to one’s meals not only made it spicy and hot, but also defended against epilepsy, excessive black bile, and demonic possession. Sheep intestines (*rivanj*) cooked with other kinds of food were another antidote for counteracting both poison and the jinn.²⁶⁷ In suggesting these remedies, Amanullah Khan considered demonic possession (*asib-i div*) synonymous with *waswas* as a serious mental disorder, whose cure lay as much in dietary and olfactory substances as in exorcist rituals.

As many as four Indo-Persian occult manuals discussing demonology, jinn possession, exorcism, and interpretation of devilish dreams from the turn of the seventeenth century have survived to the present. They are Usman bin Abdullah’s *Ta’bir-Nama* (“Interpretation Manual”, 1592), Vajih al-Din’s *Miftah al-Da’wat* (“Key of Invocations and Conjurations”, 1598), an anonymous *Risala dar Ta’bir-i Khwab* (“Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams”, c.1600), and Muhammad Rafi Va’iz Qazvini’s *Abwab al-Jinan* (“Chapters on the Jinns”, 1617).²⁶⁸ It is unclear precisely where each of them was commissioned, but their presence in South Asian archives suggests they were subcontinental rather than Iranian or Central Asian compositions.

The *Ta’bir Nama* and *Risala dar Ta’bir-i Khwab*, for instance, are both dream interpretation manuals that have sections on demons (*divs*) and madness (*diwanagi*). They cite the divergent opinions of multiple Islamic authorities like the Shi’a Arab jurist Ja’far Sadiq (d. 770), Ibn Sina, the Andalusian philosopher al-Kermani (d. 1066), and the Moroccan scholar Ja’bar Maghribi (d. 1180) to offer a commentary on the possible meanings of such dreams. Somatic visions of the devil brought abomination and suffering on people, and his whispering evil things (*waswas*) into their ears was a sign of divine disfavour. Dreams of defeating Satan (*shaitan*) in a fight indicated the constancy and strength of their piety. Seeing Satan joyous and happy highlighted people’s weakness giving into temptations of corruption, lust and carnal impulses, while the devil’s unhappiness and depression meant the people’s chastity, devotion and obedience. Dreams of demonic possession signified the immorality of their soul, the enemy’s victory, imprisonment of their mind, and their great sins and evil desires in revealing secrets to the devil. Madness

²⁶⁵ Hakim Taqiuddin Ali, *Mizān al-Taba’i-yi Qutb Shahi* (Tibb. 266, No. 4037, Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts at Salar Jung Museum and Library, Vol. X, Hyderabad), ff. 28a, 34a, 39b, 47b, 54a-57a.

²⁶⁶ Fabrizio Speziale, “Amān Allāh Ḥān ‘Amānī”, *Dastūr al-hunūd* (Perso-Indica website, 2010).

²⁶⁷ Amanullah Khan Amani, *Dastur al-Hunud* (Tibb. 91, No. 1721, Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts at Salar Jung Museum and Library, Vol. X, Hyderabad), ff. 5b-6a, 14a, 33a.

²⁶⁸ See Abdullah, *Ta’bir Nama*, (No. 1/57, Habibganj Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, UP); Vajih al-Din, *Miftah al-Da’wat* (I.O. Islamic 1008, British Library, London), ff. 6a, 12a-14b; Anon., *Risala dar Ta’bir-i Khwab* (PR 242, Buhar Catalogue, National Library of India, Kolkata; also at the Maulana Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute, Tonk, Rajasthan; Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna; and Staatsbibliothek, Berlin); and Qazvini, *Abwab al-Jinan* (PR 211, Buhar Catalogue, National Library of India, Kolkata; also in the Delhi Persian Collection, British Library, London).

(*diwanagi*) in someone's dream, on the other hand, was a prohibited matter that was a godly manifestation of the person's inner evil, a costly bargain (*mukhaiyyar*) that aroused people's curiosity (*mudabat*). Whether they had themselves gone insane or were in conversation with a madperson, such dreams hinted at their profligacy, engagement in usury (*riba*), and corruption of their faith. Invariably, both texts prescribe Quranic incantations to exorcise the devil, negate these visions of madness, and return to the righteous Islamic path.²⁶⁹



Figure 10. "Five Animal-Headed Demons (*jinns*) Dancing and Playing Music Amidst the Clouds"
Mughal album, c.1600, © British Museum, London

A contemporary Mughal painting (above) offers a visual depiction of the prevalent belief in jinn. The image, from a Mughal album dated c.1600 in the British Museum, London, shows five animal-headed demons floating through the sky while playing a variety of instruments. The dog-headed jinn on the top right holds castanets (*kath-tala*) in both hands, while the lion-headed demon below him shakes a Persian drum (*daf*). To his left, the heron-headed figure beats a tambourine (*tanbur*), and the kneeling jinn with a caterpillar or praying mantis-head on the far left plays a lute (*rubab*). The donkey-headed jinn holding up a fan is the only figure without a musical instrument. The painting suggests a loud, wild party of jinns dancing and making merry amidst blueish hues that are meant to depict clouds. Perhaps the artist imagined each demon possessing the brain in different ways, depending on the qualities of the animal they were associated with and the musical instrument they played.

Taken together, these paintings, occult texts, and medical treatises buttress Zuhuri's poetic claims about wine-intoxication being closely linked with madness and demonic possession. Our postmodern impulse to dismiss belief in jinn as superstitious nonsense would

²⁶⁹ *Ta'bir-Nama*, ff. 108-9; *Risala dar Ta'bir-i Khwab*, ff. 86a-87a.

be a great disservice to the intellectual world of late-sixteenth-century India, where exorcism, oneirology and demonology were considered exact sciences, and were accordingly taken seriously by artists, poets, and *bakims*. While both Islamic theology and a longer South Asian tradition acknowledged jinn possession as a religious condition connected to Satan,²⁷⁰ modern psychiatry has attempted to grapple with jinn possession as a mental disorder that attributes supernatural reasons to irrational behaviors.²⁷¹ Anand Vivek Taneja has noted in the context of jinns haunting the ruins of Firoz Shah Kotla in modern-day Delhi that they could be animalistic, but were also apparitions of dead people, to satiate whose souls people would often pray.²⁷² As historians of the early modern period, we must be attuned to the prevalent Persianate belief in the corrupting psychological influence of jinns and *divs*. This was not limited to the supernatural realm but rather circulated widely across artistic, literary, and scientific contexts in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates. An intertextual reading therefore helps us understand the *Saqinama* as not simply a work of poetic fancy but rather a window into overlapping notions of insanity as demonic possession.

This descent into unreason was catalyzed and augmented by wine-drinking, lovesickness, and music, as the following verses in Zuhuri's *Saqinama* evince:

<i>The sorrow of love is contingent on pleasure, The fever of lovesickness sits in the healthy brain... The storm of love rains down from the eyes, A countless bountiful yield, the oblivion of love... O cupbearer, give me that goblet, candle and candlestick, Whose beam gently weaves its magic on my evening. I am an indebted patient; where did my manliness go? Singer and cupbearer, both my men are yours...</i>²⁷³	غم عشق پرایه بر عیش بست، تب عشق در مغز صحت نشست... فرو بارد از دیده طوفان عشق، غنیمت شمر فصل نسیان عشق... بده ساقی آن شمع ساغر لکن، که روید سحر پرتو از شام من. مریضم غریب مروت کجاست، مغنی و ساقی دو ابر شماسست...
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The pain of separation from the beloved leads to an inexplicable pleasure that is linked to the mental state of the lover. Although this was a common Sufi metaphor in Persian poetry, reading *tab-i 'ishq* as the “fever of lovesickness” in the second line gives us insights into the medical acumen that Zuhuri brought into his writing. This undertone is confirmed in the next verse, where he mentions another mental illness brought on by tears of grieving the beloved – oblivion (*nisyan*). According to the *Dastur al-Atibba*, oblivion was a kind of negligence (*ghaflat*) that had a cold, moist temperament, characterized by a decrease in the brain's power of memory (*qunwat-i hafiz*) and forgetfulness (*faramushi*). It was unfortunately an affliction that took hold among charitable, generous people. In some cases, oblivion could be so severe that it could lead to a comatose brain (*kehfta-sar*) or apoplexy (*sakta*). In modern psychiatric terminology, one could liken *nisyan* to dementia or Alzheimer's, although Firishta did not go so far as to explain its onset and escalation of symptoms. He did, however, prescribe cures for it once the disease progressed, like consuming five grams (one *misqal*) of Baghdadi frankincense (*kandur*) with an equal amount of moist sugar daily, eating three grams long pepper (*filfil-i daraz*) roasted alongside a goat-head,

²⁷⁰ Frederick Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Farah Islam and RA Campbell, “‘Satan Has Afflicted Me!’ Jinn-Possession and Mental Illness in the Qur’an,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (2014): 229-43.

²⁷¹ See Najat Khalifa and Tim Hardie, “Possession and jinn,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Vol. 98, No. 8 (2005): 351-3; Simon Dein and Abdool Samad Illaie, “Jinn and mental health: looking at jinn possession in modern psychiatric practice,” *The Psychiatrist*, Vol. 37, No. 9 (2013): 290-3.

²⁷² Taneja, *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi*, *South Asia in Motion* series (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

²⁷³ *Ash'ar-i Zuhuri*, f. 152a.

and rubbing oil from Malakand (near Peshawar) on a betel-leaf to be taken as a digestive.²⁷⁴ It is not a stretch to surmise that Zuhuri, writing in a similar milieu as Firishta (they were courtly contemporaries in Ahmednagar and later Bijapur), would have been aware of such medical descriptions for oblivion when he poetically expressed the effects of lovesickness and grief on the brain.

Zuhuri goes on to link the Sufi metaphor of a candle burning brightly and attracting the beloved to the hallucinatory effects of wine-drinking from a goblet, such that in his intoxicated state, the lover imagines the flame of the candle flickering and weaving its magic. As a drunk, lovesick patient, he feels emasculated (*murawwat kujast*, lit. “where did my manliness go?”). This verse offers an interesting commentary on the overlap between wine-intoxication, mental imbalance, and lack of masculinity. As Emma Flatt notes, *javanmardi* or manliness in Deccani courtly contexts, building on a longer Persianate tradition, was defined by martial skills, virility, homosocial bonding, ethical Quranic education, physical training in sports, and virtues like justice, compassion and, most importantly, rationality.²⁷⁵ Zuhuri suggests that this normative performance of masculinity was threatened by lovesickness and inebriation. Surrendering his singer and cupbearer (*mughanni-o-saqi*) only serve to cement this feeling of powerlessness and giving up male agency, since it connotes a lack of self-control, lowering of inhibitions, and indulging in music and wine-drinking.

*[If] the redness of wine in the tulip runs to the head,
Why would the song not become colorful and fresh?
Give me refreshing melodies for this leaded brain,
Hammer reason into this enigma of light-headedness...
[All] pleasure and joy have died from this despondency,
A woman the feast of my pain, resurrection of no use.
The wind of my pain is ejected by the coral of [her] lips,
Making the songs of joy colorful [again]...
Soothe my ears by humming a melody,
Cast into a reservoir the chattel of my intellect.²⁷⁶*

می لاله کون بر دودیت بسر،
نباشد چرا نغمه رنگین و تر.
بده نغمهای ترم سرب مغز،
بکوبای عقل سبک سر بلغز...
ز افسردگی مرده عیش و سرور،
زنی سور دردم، بی نفع صور.
به قی باد دردم ز مرجان لب،
که رنگین شود نغمهای طرب...
بیک نغمه بنواز گوش مرا،
ببر مزد کالای هوش مرا.

The imagery of the tulip (*lala*) is important to unpack here, as the flower’s wine reaches the narrator’s head and causes him to become mentally disturbed. Its invocation in Persian and Turkish poetry was tied to the shape of the poppy resembling a goblet filled with red wine. While its black center indicated an excess of black bile (*sanda*) in the head, the leading cause of madness in Unani medicine, the red petals surrounding it symbolized Farhad’s blood when he committed suicide in his love for Shirin from the famous *masnavi Khusrav-wa-Shirin* (1188) by Nizami Ganjavi. It was also mentioned in Jami’s version of *Layla-Majnun* (1484) as a poetic metaphor for the lover’s sorrow upon separation from his beloved: “every tulip that grows out of Majnun’s

²⁷⁴ *Dastur al-Atibba*, f. 75a. There is no proof that these concoctions would have actually worked to cure a mental illness like oblivion, but the references to frankincense from Baghdad and oil from Malakand in a medical manuscript from Bijapur suggest the wide circulation of such commodities for medicinal, perfuming, and culinary purposes across the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Deccan. See, among others: Stephen Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600-1750* (Cambridge Series in Islamic Civilization, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jagjeet Lally, *India and the Silk Roads: The History of a Trading World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Burton Cleetus and Anne Gerritsen (eds.), *Histories of Health and Materiality in the Indian Ocean World: Medicine, Material Culture and Trade, 1600-2000* (Bloomsbury, 2023); Amrita Chattopadhyay, “A Study of Aromatic Woods in Seventeenth-Century India: Circulation of Aloewood and Sandalwood through Facilitating Port Cities and Trade Networks,” *Crossroads*, Vol. 20 (2021): 76-117; and Emma Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), esp. Chapters 1 and 3.

²⁷⁵ Flatt, “Chapter 6: Martial Skills” in *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, pp. 268-302.

²⁷⁶ *Ash’ar-i Zuhuri*, ff. 155a-156a.

dust bears the scar of Layla in its heart.”²⁷⁷ It is no surprise, then, that when Shah Jahan lamented his wife Mumtaz Mahal’s death in 1631, he insisted on the architects of the Taj Mahal in Agra carving tulips and poppies on the couple’s grave to indicate his Majnun-like disposition, which continued till his own death in 1666.²⁷⁸ The tulip also frequently represented the verdant valleys of Kashmir in Mughal poetry.²⁷⁹ As a commodity, it became so popularly grown across the Safavid and Ottoman Empires that Dutch merchants visiting in the early-seventeenth century took it back with them to Holland. This led to a surge in demand in Amsterdam for tulip bulbs between 1634 and 1637, a period known in Dutch history as “tulip mania”, referring both to the sudden trading boom caused by the flower and its inherent connection with insanity. According to the Dutch traveler Elizabeth van der Woude, “...if it was madness to admire the works of God, then the world was full of madmen; if it was madness to trade in tulips, it was madness to trade *tout court*.”²⁸⁰

Music and singing become the dominant theme in the next few verses of the *Saqinama*. The narrator desires colorful songs (*naghma-yi rangin*) to rejuvenate his rotten, lead-heavy brain (*surb-maghz*), which has been dulled by wine and made unsteady by lack of reason (*‘aql*). These melodies drill common sense into the intoxicated head of the lover and make them think straight instead of clouding their judgment under alcoholic influence. Even as Zuhuri laments the sorrow and pain of being separated from the beloved, the lover tries to alleviate their mental and emotional distress by imagining the beloved’s lips blowing a wind-instrument whose sound brings pleasure and joy to their ears. This enables them to move past the sorrow and throw aside “the chattel of intellect” (*kala-yi hosh*). Thus, musical notes become a conduit for psychological healing and facilitate a return to rational thinking.

This poetic understanding of music’s therapeutic properties drew on contemporary South Asian musical and medical treatises, where lilting Iranian melodies and Hindustani *ragas* were thought to induce clarity amidst psychological tumult. Jahangir’s personal physician, Hakim Sadr al-Din Shirazi,²⁸¹ is supposed to have left behind a diary titled the *Bayaz-i Masih al-Zaman* (“Diary of the Healer of the Age”, c.1635), which details twelve different tunes (*maqamat*) of Iranian music. Each tune was associated with the sounds of a different bird or animal and with a different season of the year. All of them helped restore humoral balance in the listener’s body and some of them were particularly useful in ameliorating brain afflictions. For instance, ‘*iraq*’ was the tune of a cow’s mooing during Nauroz (the beginning of spring) and a cure for epilepsy (*sar’a*) in the listener.²⁸² In Hindustani music, by contrast, the *shringar rasa* (erotic sentiment) was evocative of both love and lovesickness (*‘ishq*) and central to maintaining mental well-being, as evidenced in Mughal musicological tracts like Mirza Raushan Zamir’s *Tarjuma-yi Parijata* (1666) and Saif Khan Faqirullah’s *Rag Darpan* (1666), both adaptations of earlier Sanskrit works.²⁸³

²⁷⁷ Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: Imagery in Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 131-6, 167-9, 369.

²⁷⁸ Ebba Koch, “The Mughal emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus, or the Album as a Think Tank for Allegory”, *Muqarnas*, Vol. 27 (2010): 277-311. It is said that Shah Jahan’s hair turned white within two years of Mumtaz Mahal’s death.

²⁷⁹ Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Anubhuti Maurya, “Of Tulips and Daffodils: Kashmir Jannat Nazir as a Political Landscape in the Mughal Empire”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, No. 15 (2017): 37-44.

²⁸⁰ Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 303. See also Mike Dash, *Tulipomania: The Story of the World’s Most Coveted Flower and the Extraordinary Passions It Aroused* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001); Anna Pavord, *The Tulip: The Story of a Flower That Has Made Men Mad* (New York: Bloomsbury, 1999).

²⁸¹ Not to be confused with the Persian polymath Mulla Sadra (1572-1641), his contemporary in Safavid Iran.

²⁸² Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995), pp. 125-7. I have unfortunately not been able to locate a physical manuscript copy of the *Bayaz-i Masih al-Zaman* in Indian and British archives.

²⁸³ While the *Tarjuma-yi Parijata* was a Persian commentary on and part-translation of Ahobala’s *Sangitaparijata*, *Rag Darpan* borrowed heavily from Raja Man Singh Tomar’s *Manakutubala*. See Allyn Miner, “Ch 14: Raga in the Early

Ragamala paintings from Rajasthan and the Deccan depicting various seasons of the year according to different *ragas* sometimes visually represented their palliative psychological effects on the listener.²⁸⁴

Moreover, the largest Mughal medical encyclopedia to date from the reign of Shah Jahan attests to the widespread prescription of music therapy as a treatment for various mental illnesses. Nuruddin Shirazi's *Ilajāt-i Dara Shukohi* ("Treatments for Dara Shukoh", 1646) was commissioned by the crown prince Dara Shukoh and combined Unani and Ayurvedic theories.²⁸⁵ As part of its third chapter on sciences other than medicine, the *Ilajāt* describes the science of music (*ilm-i mosiqi*) comprising twelve songs (*suruds*), each with their specific moods, temperaments, and healing powers. Here he discusses music therapy as a cure for lovesickness, madness, encephalitis, melancholia, and apoplexy.²⁸⁶

*The laughter of intoxication has pierced my being,
It has brought my heart's deepest secret to my lips.
I am more or less freed of premeditation/ cogitation,
I am freed of the drudgery and burden of grief...
This tumult brought me to the desert of insanity,
I was driven out there by the tears of Majnun.
I struck the axe of self-destruction in love,
Like a wine-desiring Farhad caught in the thicket...
Since reason caused confusion in my work,
At your command it was dismissed from office.
If one is not attentive to the reason of madmen,
[Then] the sobs of the drunkard are not wine...
Black bile makes me oblivious to the vagaries of existence,
Just as by joining my heart with yours I become sane.
O cupbearer, if you witness the wonders of that fairy,
I will not take from your hand that pure wine.*²⁸⁷

بمستی در خنده چون سفته ام،
یام ته دل بلب گفته ام.
ز اندیشه بیش و کم فار غم،
ز حمالی بار غم فار غم.
بشوری بدشت جنون آمدم،
که از اشک مجنون برون آمدم.
زدم در محبت بباتیشه،
که فرهاد میخواست هم بیشه...
چو در کار من عقل کردی خلل،
بحکم تو معزول شد از عمل...
نگاهی اگر عقل دیوانه نیست،
شرابی اگر گریه مستانه نیست...
ز سودای کون و مکان غافلم،
همین با تو دارد دل عاقلم.
بساقی کری گر کند جلوه حور،
ز دستش نگیرم شراب طهور...

These verses from *Saginama* reflect an intensification of drunken stupor as the lover lowers his inhibitions, revealing secrets and laughing deliriously (*ba-masti dar-khanda*). Here, wine intoxication helps alleviate his pain instead of aggravating his lovesickness, as he embraces a state of nonchalance. He doesn't need to deliberate his actions or romanticize the separation from his beloved, letting the alcohol wash over him instead. This is not simply a "let's drown our sorrows" moment. It needs to be historicized in the early modern South Asian milieu, where the sense-dulling hallucinatory effects of alcohol were discussed in specific contexts.

To this end, the *Jahangirnama* narrates an insightful episode after the Mughal emperor's conquest of the Kangra Fort in the Himachal (lower Himalayas) region in 1620-21.²⁸⁸ Passing through the

Sixteenth Century" and Katherine Butler Schofield, "Ch 15: Learning to Taste the Emotions: The Mughal Rasika" in Schofield and Francesca Orsini (eds.), *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India* (London: Open Book Publishers, 2015), pp. 393-4, 413-4.

²⁸⁴ Daljit Kaur, *Ragachitra: Deccani Ragamala Paintings* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2014); Molly Aitken, "The Laud Ragamala Album, Bikaner, and the Sociability of Subimperial Painting", *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2013): 27-58. On monsoon ragas, see Schofield, Margrit Pernau and Imke Rajamani (eds.), *Monsoon feelings: a history of emotions in the rain* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2018). I thank Aparajita Das for this reference.

²⁸⁵ Speziale, "The Encounter of Medical Traditions in Nūr al-Dīn Šīrāzī's *Ilajāt-i Darā Šīkōhi*," *eJournal of Indian Medicine*, Vol. 3 (2010): 53-67.

²⁸⁶ Shirazi, *Ilajāt-i Dara Shukohi*, Persian Ms. 201, Wellcome Collection, London; Ms. Supplément Persan 342, 342B, 342A, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

²⁸⁷ *Ash'ar-i Zuhuri*, ff. 157b-158b.

²⁸⁸ On the Mughal conquest of Kangra, starting under Akbar in 1570 and completed under Jahangir in 1621, see Ashok Jerath, *Forts and Palaces of the Western Himalaya* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 25-27;

town of Nurpur, he records meeting a Hindu ascetic by the name of Sanyasi Moti, a renunciate who was known for relinquishing all self-control and surrendering his decision-making powers (*matlaq-i ikhtiyyar*). Curious, Jahangir requested a meeting with the sanyasi and found that the sage had an eerie perseverance (*istiqamat-i ajabi*) about him, which led Jahangir to wonder if his resolve might break in a state of intoxication, senselessness, and lack of self-consciousness (*dar halat-i masti wa bikhbari wa bikhudi*). Accordingly, he was asked to drink several goblets of double-strength spirits (*'araq-i do atisha*). But not a hair on his head moved till he finally fell unconscious (*bibosh*). He was then carried away like a corpse, while Jahangir prayed to God that he not die. Eventually the emperor was so impressed by this feat of the sanyasi resisting the effects of *'araq* and retaining his composure that he commissioned the Pindori temple in that area for local devotees of the hermit.²⁸⁹ In testing the limits of the Hindu ascetic's tolerance and stoic disposition, Jahangir wanted to provoke a reaction by getting him drunk, the assumption being that excessive *'araq* drinking was bound to undo his mental determination. But clearly the sanyasi was unmoved by alcohol and his powers of renunciation and discipline won the day despite ostensibly giving up self-control. The story also had a visual afterlife: a Pahari painting dated c.1680 titled "The Ordeal by Liquor" (below) depicts the meeting of Jahangir with Sanyasi Moti. It shows at least fifteen delirious women drunk on *'araq*, some falling out of a window in the Kangra Fort, others making obeisance to the sanyasi sitting placidly on a leopard skin on the right, as a bemused Jahangir watches on. The painting is not entirely faithful to the *Jahangirnama* since the latter does not mention any female followers of the sanyasi or their simultaneous inebriation.



Figure 11. "The Ordeal by Liquor", Chamba/ Nurpur
Pahari painting, c. 1680 © Sotheby's Collection, London

Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Panjab in the Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University, 1991); and BN Goswamy and JS Grewal, *The Mughal and Sikh Rulers and the Vaishnavas of Pindori: A Historical Interpretation of 52 Persian Documents* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969).

²⁸⁹ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (1980), pp. 328-9.

Wine drinking was common and indeed expected in social settings, but the problem arose when intoxication clouded the mind. It had prevented earlier kings like Babur (r. 1526-30) or his Safavid counterpart Shah Isma'il (r. 1501-24) from performing their stately duties.²⁹⁰ As Rudi Matthee has shown in the case of Safavid Iran, theoretical proscriptions of alcohol were based on Quranic exegesis, even as practical consumption continued in taverns and courtly assemblies. But excessive drinking could hinder judgment and lead to rash, unsound decisions that stemmed from mental imbalance. For instance, Shah 'Abbas II (d. 1666) in a state of wine-inebriation ordered the execution of several concubines, leading to his poisoning in retaliation. In a similar vein, tobacco was thought to damage the brain, causing rulers like King James I of England to write a treatise on its ill-effects and increasing taxes on its consumption in 1608.²⁹¹

Coming back to the *Saqinama*, the lover's gradual loss of self-control precipitates his arrival in the desert of insanity (*ba-dasht-i junun amadam*), an oblique reference to Majnun's nomadic wanderings driven by wildness after Layla's parents forbid him from seeing her again. The character of Farhad from *Khusrau-wa-Shirin* is brought in as an example of a jilted lover whose final act of suicide was the culmination of his grief mixed with alcoholism and mental disturbance. Zuhuri then sets up a dichotomy between reason and wine-induced madness, disregarding the former for only causing further psychological confusion (*kehila*). The lover's tears catalyze madness, which has its own rational logic (*'aql-i divana*) aided by wine-drinking. In the last couple of verses, Zuhuri demonstrates an awareness of Unani humoral theory as excessive black bile (*sauda*) numbs the lover to the practicalities of the world around him. Since the only way out of this madness is to reunite with the beloved, he beseeches the cupbearer to tell him if anyone sights the miraculous charms of that angel (*jahwa-yi hur*), which would be the sole reason for him to give up wine.

In offering this close intertextual reading of Zuhuri's *Saqinama*, I have argued that wine-drinking around the turn of the seventeenth century in South Asia was intimately tied with unreason, jinn possession, and madness. This poetic ode to the cupbearer cannot be dismissed as simply recycling earlier Persianate literary tropes, since Zuhuri was actively engaging with the Deccani and Mughal milieu in which he lived. By reading occult texts, medical manuscripts and courtly chronicles in tandem with his poetry, we acquire a deeper understanding of early modern views on lovesickness abetted by alcoholic consumption. This combination caused a gradual descent into insanity where exorcist rituals, music therapy, and herbal remedies borrowing on various genres of contemporary scientific knowledge were woven into Zuhuri's poetry to suggest ways to alleviate mental distress. While it remains inflected with Sufi imagery and poetic metaphors, the *Saqinama* also details the precise effects of alcohol as a mind-altering substance, both stimulating the brain and dulling sensory perception to the point of madness.

Persian Innovations of Love-Madness: *Layla-Majnun* and Beyond

Literary references to classical Persian poetry were part of a larger seventeenth-century Indo-Persian poetic engagement with love-madness. For instance, Khan-i 'Azam (d. 1625 in Ahmedabad and buried in Delhi, another desert of insanity), the son of Akbar's foster-brother Mirza 'Aziz Koka,²⁹² was well-known for composing poetry and wrote the following verses:

²⁹⁰ Stephanie Honchell, "The Story of a Drunken Mughal: Islam, Alcohol, and Imperial Ambition," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, Vol. 29 (2015): 4-28; S.P. Sangar, "Intoxicants in Mughal India," *Indian Journal of the History of Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1981): 202-214.

²⁹¹ Matthee, Chapter 4 in *Angels Tapping at the Wine-shop's Door: A History of Alcohol in the Islamic World* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2023); Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), esp. Chapters 2 and 3 on wine-drinking, Chapter 5 on tobacco.

²⁹² On Mirza 'Aziz Koka and his relationship with Akbar, see Shounak Ghosh, "Epistolary Strategies of Negotiation: Reading a Fraternal Dispute at the Mughal Court, 1593-1594," *Ties of Kinship and Islamicate Societies*, edited by Cecilia Palombo and Birte Kristiansen, in *Medieval Encounters*, Special Issue, Vol. 29, No. 5-6 (2023): 521-554.

*Love came and strengthened me with madness,
And released me from the company of wisdom.
I was freed from the strictures of religion and learning,
So that the chain of someone's locks enslaved me.*²⁹³

عشق آمد و از جنون برسوم زد،
و از صحبت خرد مندم کرد.
آزاد ز بند دین و دانش گشتم،
تا سلسله زلف کسی بندم کرد.

This duality of wisdom (*khirad*) and insanity (*junun*) was mutually constitutive, since it was one's ability to break free of reason and knowledge that allowed lovesickness and madness to grow; put differently, the power of love exposed the pitfalls of rationality and made people veer towards the path of irrationality. In keeping with recent scholarship that has emphasized the newness or freshness (*taz̄a-gu'i*) of Indo-Persian poetry in this period,²⁹⁴ I will explore how Persian poets across the Mughal and Deccani realms experimented with established conventions and innovated their own South Asian styles of writing about lovesickness, madness, and unreason, often in conversation with their Safavid contemporaries.

Various regional adaptations of the Layla-Majnun legend validate this poetic axiom. Michal Hasson notes how Brajbhasha, Urdu and Dakhni poets in addition to Persian ones were deeply invested in attaching symbolic meaning to the love story in general and to the suffering of Majnun as a lovestruck madman in particular by grafting it onto their own local context.²⁹⁵ Based on this, I will argue that Indo-Persian poets invoked metaphors from the Layla-Majnun folklore to craft South Asian variants of unrequited love leading to insanity, often inspired by the Sanskrit tradition as well as by literary influences from Iran, Central Asia and Europe.

For example, Zulali Khwansari (d. 1616) was a Safavid poet in the court of Shah 'Abbas (r. 1588-1629) in Isfahan, best known for his *Mahmud-o-Ayaz*, a *masnavi* on the romance between Mahmud of Ghazni and his slave Ayaz.²⁹⁶ His *Chah-i Visal* ("Well of Union", 1610) was a version of *Layla-wa-Majnun* that probably circulated in India, as attested by a surviving copy of the manuscript at Aligarh Muslim University, compiled by Mulla Tughra at Jahangir's court.²⁹⁷ After a formulaic verse-discussion of Majnun's lovesickness, Zulali compares his mental state to that of Yusuf and Plato:

*The well is not an ensnaring ring of the earth,
Holding a hundred savages in its ambush.
His waist was fastened down with a noose,
Majnun was taken captive behind the door.
With resolute desire did Yusuf tie his waist,
But was confined due to his father's command...
The seventh well made [Majnun] a recluse,
The Plato of love became a crooked resident...
As soon as he allowed tightness in his shoe,
He left his mind for the hem of the desert...*

نه چاهی حلقه دام زمین بود،
که صد وحشی را در کمین بود.
کمر بستند او را با کمندی،
که مجنون را زر در افتاد بندی.
بعزم چاه چون یوسف کمر بست،
ولی از بهر فرمان پدر بست...
بچاه هفتمین خلوت گزین شد،
فلاطون محبت خم نشین شد...
چنان چه داد تنکش در نعل جا،
که رفت از خاطرش دامن صحرا...

²⁹³ *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri* (1980), pp. 405-6.

²⁹⁴ Rajeev Kinra, "Fresh Words for a Fresh World: *Taz̄a-Gu'i* and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian," *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, Vol. 3 (2007): 125-149; Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia* (2017); Muzaffar Alam, "The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1998): 317-349; Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Figbani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998).

²⁹⁵ Hasson, "Crazy in Love: The Story of Laila and Majnun in Early Modern South Asia" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2018); A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Leyli o Majnun," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2009). For more on *Layla-wa-Majnun* and its popularity in Akbar's period, see my second chapter.

²⁹⁶ Paul Losensky, "Zulālī-yi Khwānsārī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (2012).

²⁹⁷ Zulali, *Chah-i Visal musammi ba Layla-wa-Majnun* (Nazm 2/51/4, University Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University), ff. 39a-46a.

*Like salt on kebab, it became a festering wound,
Insanity teaches love to be full of evil and tumult.*²⁹⁸

نمک سود کباب زخم ناسور،
جنون آموز عشق پر شر و شور.

Just as Zuhuri contrasted the wine-addled unreason of Majnun and Farhad, here Zulali juxtaposes the love-insanity of Majnun with the unrestrained desire of Yusuf as the antithesis to Plato's rational love. Indeed, the word *chah* meaning "well" or "pit" was almost always associated with Yusuf or Bizhan in Persian literature. As Majnun's madness for Layla drove him to the point of savagery and violence, his family held him back with a lasso (*kamandi*) and isolated, perhaps chained, him for his own good. Zulali compares this to Yusuf's unbound passion for Zulaikha that led to his father locking him up, since they had both transgressed Platonic virtues of balance and sanity. In choosing the path of wildness and reclusion, Majnun became a social outcast who let his mental distress get the better of him, allowing the psychological wound to fester (*zakhm-i nasur*) instead of treating it. Thus, Zulali opines that love-madness which exceeded rational limits was replete with wrongdoing and turmoil (*pur-shar-o-shur*).

However, the Safavid poet's clear differentiation between rational love and insanity did not carry over to contemporary Mughal experiments with the Majnun trope. Some Indian poets invoked Plato and Galen to cement rather than contradict the madman's claims to erudition. Thus, 'Abd al-Samad Akbarabadi, the nephew of Abu al-Fazl, writes in the Introduction to his Sufi *tazkira Akhbar al-Asfiya* (1608) about his native city of Agra:

The homeland of the writer of this text is a city such that a thousand Egypts and Baghads could be sacrificed for its climate [alone]. It is a well-inhabited place where, in every corner, the Arabia of Majnun is chained in its hairs ...
*Its residents are knowledge-increasers, masters of Platonic intoxication
Sharp-witted, rightly motivated, both evaluators and practitioners of art
Its speech two-thirds of the seven climes, elegance and delight from shore to shore
Its knowledge is beyond measure, scholars' lives are refreshed by it
Wandering in its desert is breath-alchemy, an antidote for the Galenic brain.*²⁹⁹

Aside from eulogizing his hometown, this extract sheds light on the various ways in which Akbarabadi visualized the coexistence of madness and wisdom in the Mughal capital. The Arabia of Majnun was chained in its hairs, which is not just an invocation of *Layla-Majnun*, but also a historical reference to the madmen who inhabited early-seventeenth-century Agra. At the same time, the city was a haven for scholarly knowledge, where masters of Platonic intoxication (*nashayi Falatuni*) wandered in its breath-alchemizing desert. A Galenic brain (*maghzi Jalinus*) could imply a brain filled with black bile (*sauda*), leading to madness and melancholia. To write that Agra served as an antidote to such a brain meant that its atmosphere of rationality would help alleviate any mental illness. For Akbarabadi, this by no means subverted his earlier observation about madness lurking in the city's corners; rather, the wilderness of Agra provided fertile grounds for insanity and sagacity to complement each other. The Majnun trope was therefore gradually being subverted to reflect South Asian socio-political realities.

²⁹⁸ Zulali, *Chah-i Visal*, ff. 40b-41a.

²⁹⁹ "Watangah-i raqim-i ein nigaristan shabrast ki bazar Misr-o-Baghdad fida-yi ab-o-hawa-yi oust. Wa ma'mura-yi ki 'Arabistan-i Majnun zanjir-i miyan-i ou dar har gusha-yi ou ...

*Sakinanish bedanish-afzuni, sahib-i nasha-yi Falatuni
Tir-maghzan, rast-andisha, ham hunar-sanj wa ham hunar-pisha
Sukhanish char dang-i haft iqlim, az kiran ta kiran benaz-o-na'im
D'Anish-i anja birun az andisha, jan-i danishwaran az ou taza
Gard-i sabrayish kimiya-yi nafs, nusbdaru-yi maghzi Jalinus."*

See Introduction in Shadma Shahzad, "A Critical Edition of *Akhbar-ul-Asfiya*, with Introduction and Notes" (Aligarh Muslim University: PhD dissertation in Persian and Urdu, 2013): 52.

A telling episode occurs in the *masnavi Suz-o-Gudāz* (“Burning and Melting”, 1604) by Muhammad Riza Nau’i, written under the patronage of Jahangir’s brother Prince Daniyal in Burhanpur just before the latter’s death. Daniyal tasked Nau’i with composing a uniquely Indian love story that did not replicate *Shirin-Farhad* or *Layla-Majnun*, which were now hackneyed legends rendered stale with overuse, but instead incorporated the surroundings they lived in and saw around them. Even as Nau’i claimed to follow Daniyal’s directive and offer a new Hindustani story, he retained some plotlines from *Layla-Majnun*, for instance the blossoming of love as children who are then betrothed. *Suz-o-Gudāz* is remembered for depicting the theme of sati among Hindu women in the early modern period, to which Daniyal claimed to have been an eyewitness. When the groom dies on the day of his wedding in a tragic accident, the woman voluntarily jumps on her to-be husband’s funeral pyre despite her family’s attempts to stop her. Akbar and Daniyal personally intervene and try to talk her out of it, but she remains adamant and eventually the emperor and prince sanction her sati.³⁰⁰ An accompanying painting (below) evocatively illustrates her love-sacrifice.



Figure 12. “A Hindu princess commits sati with the reluctant consent of Prince Daniyal (bottom right)”
Scene from Nau’i’s *Suz-o-Gudāz*, painting by Riza, 1610
© Wellcome Collection 11923i, London

³⁰⁰ Michael Chagnon, “Flirting with the Radical: Intertextuality, Intervisuality, and Gendered Subversions in Manuscripts of *Sūz u Gudāz*,” *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World*, No. 2 (2021): 55-96; Sunil Sharma, “Novelty, Tradition and Mughal Politics in Nau’i’s *Sūz u Gudāz*,” in Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma (eds.), *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on His 80th Birthday* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2007), pp. 251-65; Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (trans.), *Burning and Melting: Being the *Suz-u-Gudāz* of Muhammad Riza Nau’i of Khabushan* (London: Luzac, 1912).

On seeing her beloved's funeral procession, Nau'i describes the female protagonist's mental state in these terms:

*When the maiden saw that disturbing dream,
Like a rose devastated, her veil overcame her.
From swooning, her head became intoxicated,
With thorns in her feet and fire in her foaming hand.
With a nail in the flower, her face splintered by thorns,
The garden was astonished at her yellow countenance.
With her own hand, she scratched out her eyes,
Plucking her eyebrows like a thorn from her foot.
With blood from the narcissus, she washed her head,
In place of a smile, her lips were adorned with poison.
Her swoon was more naked than flower petals,
Her collar more torn than the skirt of a flower.
Barefoot and bareheaded like a seductive flame,
She screamed, "Layla has turned into Majnun!"
From the intoxications of the passion of sacrifice,
She became like a moth drawn to the candle.
When at night her disturbance had reduced,
She sauntered in like a cypress to embrace the fire.
From the passion of burning in the fire of her beloved,
The flame on her skin could not be contained.³⁰¹*

چو آن خواب پریشان دید دختر،
چو گل برباد چرب داد معجر.
ز غشتخانه سر مستانه برجست،
خسک در پای و آتش در کف دست.
بناخن در گل رو خار شکست،
ز پیلی شبیه در گلزار شگفت.
بدست خود ز چشم توتیا سای،
مژه بر کند چون خار از کف پای...
بخون از نرگس تر سرمد می شست،
ز لب جای تبسم زهر میرست.
غش عریان تر از پیرامن گل،
گریبان چاک تر از دامن گل.
برهنه پا و سر چون شعله مفتون،
همی گفتی که لیلی گشته مجنون...
ز مستیهای شوق جانساری،
شده پروانه شمع عماری.
چو شب کم کرده راهان مشوش،
خرامان شد با استقبال آتش.
ز شوق سوختن در آتش دوست،
نمی گنجید همچون شعله در پوست.

This is a crucial part of the *masnavi* that not only reveals the build-up to the Hindu woman's intention of committing voluntary sati, but also turns the Layla-Majnun metaphor on its head. Her grief at her betrothed's unexpected death tipped her over the edge as her head became senseless from fainting (*az ghashtkebana, sar mastana*), causing her to feel pricked all over by thorns and become pale-faced with anguish and madness. The immensity of her sorrow was reflected in the poisonous glimmer on her lips, her wildness apparent in her torn collar (*gariban-i chak*), unfiltered, naked swooning (*ghash-i 'uryan*), and throwing caution to the winds of patriarchal modesty in her refusal to wear a veil on her head or shoes on her feet. These behaviors are strongly reminiscent of Majnun's savage wanderings through the desert, connoting a reversal of gender roles that is confirmed in the woman's scream that Layla had turned into Majnun. Much like Zulaikha in Jami's *Yusuf-Zulaikha*, the woman unabashedly expressed her love-madness to the astonishment of those present, a display of female agency rare in Mughal sources. Just when the latter thought she had regained her sanity, she calmly walked onto the beloved's funeral pyre, paying no heed to the audience of men surrounding her watching in horror, as the painting represents. The moment of sati therefore becomes an expression of her volition against societal norms instead of the later stereotype of family honor forcing her to commit suicide, as colonial sources were wont to note.³⁰² Her insanity rendered her transgression permissible, with the subsequent intervention of Akbar and Daniyal coming to naught. This amalgam of the Hindu

³⁰¹ Nau'i, *Suẓ-o-Gudāz*, MS Or. 2839, British Museum, London, ff. 13a-b.

³⁰² On sati in colonial India and its abolition in Bengal in 1829 with the reformist actions of Raja Rammohun Roy and Lord William Bentinck, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate Around Sati in Colonial India* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1998); on European reactions to this barbaric practice as somehow symbolic of the depravity of Indian civilization, see Pompa Banerjee, *Burning Women: Widows, Witches, and Early Modern European Travelers in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); on reform movements by and for women in South Asia more generally, see Sumit and Tanika Sarkar (eds.), *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader, Vol. 1* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

practice of sati with an Islamicate legend to express love-madness is testament to the religious and literary experiments recasting Persian tropes in keeping with South Asian customs and practices.

Three more examples of Persian poetry from disparate regions of the Mughal Empire illustrate this early modern juxtaposition of Islamicate and Indic literary traditions of love-madness. The first is Masih Panipati's *Masnavi-yi Ram-wa-Sita*, a Persian retelling of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* composed at Jahangir's court in Agra in c.1620.³⁰³ During Sita's ordeal by fire to prove her chastity and fidelity to Ram after returning from Ravana's palace in Lanka, the poet deploys the Layla-Majnun and Khusrau-Shirin allegories to express her feelings:

*The lover is neither an infidel nor Muslim,
She only knows love itself to be faith and religion.
I couldn't care less about heresy and faith,
A love story makes my eyes shed tears of blood.
I didn't see Layla's beauty or Shirin's charm,
I don't know who went to hell or heaven.
Neither do I wish to burn in the fire of Ram,
Nor to sleep peacefully in Majnun's grave.*³⁰⁴

نه عاشق کافر است و نه مسلمان،
که داند عشق را خود دین و ایمان...
نه من دارم به کفر و دینشان کار،
به عشق افسانه چشم گشت خونبار.
ندیدم حسن لیلی ناز شیرین،
ندانم کو به دوزخ رفت یا این.
نخواهم سوختن در آتش رام،
نه اندر گور مجنون خواب و آرام.

Working backwards to unpack these verses helps us understand the connotations of love-madness for Sita. In contrast with the *Suz-o-Gudaḡ* that invoked Majnun to explain the woman's desire to commit sati, here Panipati underscores Sita's reluctance to burn in the fire for Ram despite her undying love. She explicitly states her wish to neither sleep in Majnun's grave, nor admire Layla or Shirin's elegance (the latter in her love for Khusrau). Sita therefore overturns the metaphor of lovesickness to resist Ram's request, even though later in the *masnawi* she gives in, comes through the fire unscathed, is unable to convince the people of Ayodhya of her innocence, and is banished from the kingdom, all in keeping with Valmiki's Sanskrit original.³⁰⁵ Panipati's literary innovation lies in comparing Sita to Layla and Shirin, as he reconstitutes the very essence of the Majnun trope and justifies invoking these Persianate stories in his retelling of a Hindu epic by addressing the irrelevance of religious fidelity to matters of love.

A second instance of redefining poetic love-madness occurs in Maulana Haji Muhammad Riza'i's *masnawi Ziba Nigar* (1643), an adaptation of the popular Sindhi folktale *Sassi-Punhun*.³⁰⁶ Riza'i based this love story on Sayyid 'Ali of Thatta (d. 1572), renaming the female lead Sassi as Ziba and the male protagonist Punhun as Nigar "for fear of offending Persian ears by outlandish names".³⁰⁷ Consider these opening verses from *Ziba Nigar*:

³⁰³ Supriya Gandhi, "Retelling the Rāma Story in Persian Verse: Masīḥ Pānīpatī's *Masnāvī-yi Rām va Sītā*", in *No Tapping Around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, eds. Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), pp. 309-24; Prashant Keshavmurthy, "Translating Rāma as a Proto-Muḥammadan Prophet: Masīḥ's *Masnāvī-yi Rām va Sītā*", *Numen* Vol. 65, No. 1 (2018): 1-27.

³⁰⁴ Lithograph of *Masnavi-yi Ram-wa-Sita* titled *Ramayan-i Masih* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1899); Ayelet Kotler, "Persian Kings and Islamic Lovers in Mughal Poetic Ramayana Translations", paper presented at *International Congress of Medieval Studies conference, Western Michigan University* (May 13, 2023).

³⁰⁵ For a comprehensive English edition of the *Ramayana*, see Robert and Sally Sutherland Goldman (eds.), *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki: The Complete English Translation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

³⁰⁶ It is likely that Riza'i modelled his *Ziba-Nigar* on the orally circulating legend of *Sassi-Pannun* rather than a preexisting textual corpus. *Sassi-Punhun* was gradually formalized in the poetic oeuvres of Shah Abdul Karim Bulri (1536-1623) and his great-great-grandson Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1690-1752). See Harnam Singh Shan, "The Romance of Sassi: A Critical and Comparative Study" (London: PhD Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1964), pp. 221-2.

³⁰⁷ Riza'i, *Ziba Nigar*, MS Or. 337, British Museum, London, f. 30b. This manuscript in the British Museum is a 1684 copy made by the scribe Jaikaran in Alamgirpur near Meerut. See Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum, Vol. II* (London: Trübner and Co., 1881), p. 684; A. Sprenger, *A Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindu'sta'ny Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1854), p. 544.

*It is rancor [to suggest] but madness is religion,
Full of the black bile of love and gold in itself...
That from madness is born [the lover's] nature,
The lettering of black bile becomes his destiny.
The madman's heart is the desert of wonder,
The heart of a pearl drop is the sea of wonder...
But intoxication that is merely drunken passion,
Lends destruction to the fistful dust of existence.*³⁰⁸

که است کین ولی دیوانگی کیش،
پر از سودای عشق و خانی از خویش...
که از دیوانگی باشد سرشتش،
بود سواد سودا سرنوشتش.
دلی دیوانه صحرای حیرت،
دلی دردانه دریای حیرت...
ولی مستی که از بس شور مستی،
دهد بر باد مشت خاک هستی.

The notion of love-madness that Riza'i espouses seems very close to the conventional trope, but reading it against the grain affords us a deeper insight into the subversive quality of his poetry in a Mughal Sindhi context. It suggests a symbiotic relationship between love and madness, where madness was not the by-product of excessive love but rather integral to the genesis of love. Much like religious belief, madness (*diwanagi*) could be dismissed as irrational or unscientific, but its preexistence was mandatory for someone to become a lover. Without that kernel of black bile (*sauda-yi 'ishq*) to instigate passion and write the lover's destiny on their forehead (*sar-nivisht*), love was shallow and meaningless, thus reversing the onset of insanity in Majnun's case. The metaphors of desert of wonder (*sabira-yi hairat*) and pearl drop in the ocean (*dardana-yi darya*) are not simply formulaic landscapes incidental to the love story. They reflect the geography of Sindh as a uniquely arid but coastal region, flanked by the Thar Desert, sand dunes of Kachchh, and rugged mountains of Baluchistan while hugging the Arabian Sea shoreline. It is also significant that *Ziba Nigar* was composed during Shah Jahan's reign, following his stay in Thatta in 1626 during his years of princely rebellion and four years before the completed construction of the Shah Jahan Masjid in 1647, modelled on the blue tilework in Samarkand he witnessed on his Central Asian campaigns.³⁰⁹

Thirdly, Kalim Kashani (d. 1651) penned ghazals in his *Divan* about madness and unreason. An Iranian émigré poet at the peripatetic Mughal court serving between Lahore, Delhi and Agra, Kashani was Shah Jahan's poet laureate and later settled in Kashmir. He wrote:

*You say the cage of reason is an iron stronghold,
But isn't the madperson's home their chains?
If insanity takes refuge in a house of chains,
It is fitting for heartless reason to have a dark house.
Do not lead me from insanity toward rationality,
Better lost than traverse the highway [of reason]...
See the expansive realm of insanity which transforms
These mountains and plains into a hundred deserts.
If you have reason, do not scorn the madman,
All alone he subdues the desert climes.
How will they ever obtain permission to wander,
If my tears do not go to the tomb of Majnun?
Desire for Layla's valley makes me a madman,
If anyone loses me in the city, search in the desert.*³¹⁰

گفتی قفس عقل حصار است ز آهن،
دیوانه مگر خانه زنجیر ندارد...
جنون بخانه زنجیر اگر پناه برد،
بجاست خانه تاریک عقل دلگیرست...
از جنونم بسوی عقل دلایت مکنید،
گم شدن بهتر از ره که درو راهزن است.
وسعت ملل جنون بنگر که یک دیوانه را،
صد بیابان در بیابان کوه و صحرا میدهد...
عقل اگر داری بچشم کم مبین دیوانه را،
یکنن اقلیم بیابان را مسخر میکند...
رخصت با دیه گردی ز کجا خواهم یافت،
اشک ما گر بسر تربت مجنون نرود...
هوای وادی لیلی ز بس دیوانه ام دارد،
بشهرم گر کسی گم کرد میجوید بصرایم.

³⁰⁸ Riza'i, *Ziba Nigar*, ff. 2b-3b.

³⁰⁹ Ahmad Hasan Dani, *Islamic Architecture: Thatta* (Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History, Culture and Civilization, 1982); Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India* (New Cambridge History of India, Vol. 1, No. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 218-9.

³¹⁰ Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, "The Poetry of Abu Talim Kalim: Persian Poet Laureate of Shahjahan Mughal Emperor of India" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1974), pp. 92-108. I thank Zainab Wani for providing me with this dissertation.

Thus, Kashani embraced madness as an incoherence that provided psychological insights beyond anything reason could answer, while continuing to invoke the Layla-Majnun legend. Wheeler Thackston's dissertation shows how Kashani pointed out the hypocrisy of reason (*'aql*) by comparing it to the chains (*zanjir*) of a madperson (*divana*). For him, insanity (*junun*) was a state of "meta-rationality" that allowed a person to express freely without being bound by reason. These three examples of poetry in Mughal India, from Agra to Sindh to Kashmir, attest to the transcreation of love-madness in local South Asian contexts and offer philosophical understandings of unreason in the early-to-mid seventeenth century. Beyond Mughal Persian poetry, Dakhni writers in 'Adil Shahi Bijapur were also positing Layla-Majnun against regional retellings of popular Hindavi Sufi romances (*premakhyans*). This collocation is apparent in Hasan Manjhu Khalji's *Pem Nem* ("Rules of Love", 1604), a version of Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* (1540), and Mulla Nusrati's *Gulshan-i 'Ishq* ("Garden of Love", 1657-8), a rendition of Manjhan Rajgiri's *Madhumalati* (1545).³¹¹

Sometimes poets would include terms like *Divana* (madman) or *Majzûb* (insane Sufi) in the titles of their works to indicate their predisposition to insanity, not as a mental illness to be medicalized or ostracized but rather as an affective state of mind to be empathized with, understood, even embraced and celebrated. As the opening anecdote of this chapter about Muhammad Salih Diwana reveals, this literary trend was already prevalent in Akbar's reign, but it gathered momentum through the seventeenth century. Poets between Safavid Iran and Mughal India engaged with the different modalities of madness to justify their use of these titles and cement their standing in literary assemblies. By consciously making insanity the predominant theme of their poetry, they piqued curiosity among readers and demonstrated their cognitive as well as metaphysical awareness of psychological disturbance.

Two prominent manuscripts in this regard are Mir Muhammad Tabrizi's *Diwan-i Majzûb* (1655) and Qasim Mashhadi's *Diwan-i Qasim Divana* (1690). We unfortunately do not know much about both poets, except that they were Iranian émigrés serving at some point in South Asia. For instance, Muhammad Tabrizi was a prolific poet who devoted his life to Sufism, thus explaining his penname (*takehallus*) of *Majzûb*, one pulled towards God and driven insane. He wrote odes to imams, composed a three-thousand-verse *masnavi* titled *Shah Rah-i Najat*, and penned ghazals modeled on Hafez's. Although based in Tabriz, he made pilgrimages to Mecca and Najaf with his father, possibly visiting India before his death in 1682.³¹² On the other hand, Qasim Mashhadi was a disciple of the famous Persian poet Sa'ib Tabrizi in Isfahan, who had risen to prominence at Shah Jahan's court in Agra and returned to Iran in 1632. Qasim traveled to the Mughal court under Aurangzeb 'Alamgir a few decades later, and possibly went to the Deccan, with conflicting versions of his death in either Delhi or Hyderabad in c.1723.³¹³ Gulchin-e Ma'ani speculates that he was called *Divana* because of his feeble (*sust*), weak-minded (*sakhijs*), enigmatic (*mu'amma-guna*) poems.³¹⁴ Clearly there was a dissonance between the two

³¹¹ Sunil Sharma, "Forging a Canon of Dakhni Literature: Translations and Retellings from Persian" in Keelan Overton (ed.), *Iran and the Deccan: Persianate Art, Culture, and Talent in Circulation, 1400–1700* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2020), pp. 401-420; Deborah Hutton, "The *Pem Nem*: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated romance from Bijapur," in Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (eds.), *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 44-63; Ali Akbar Husain, "Reading Gardens in Deccani Court Poetry: Nusrati's *Gulshan-i 'Ishq*" in Platt and Ali (eds.), *Gardens and Landscape Practice in Pre-colonial India* (2012), pp. 148-158; and Aditya Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic: India's Islamic Literary Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³¹² M.H. Razvi and MH Qaisar, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Vol. 5: Habibganj Collection, Part 1: Poetry* (Aligarh: Maulana Azad Library, 1981), No. 256, pp. 179-180; Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum, Vol. II* (London: Trubner & Co, 1881), Or. 309, pp. 696-7.

³¹³ This is debatable, since the *Safina-yi Khushgu* notes that he died in 1085 A.H. or 1674 C.E. But this would mean his *Diwan* was either completed posthumously in 1690 or came out before his death, not in 1690.

³¹⁴ Ahmad Gulchin-e Ma'ani, *Karwan-e Hind: Vol. 2* (Mashhad: Astan Quds Rezavi Central Library, 1990), pp. 1083-4.

poets' association with madness. While Tabrizi chose the penname *Majzub* to actively fashion himself as an ecstatic Sufi whose metaphysical wisdom gave him the power to access a higher reality and write divinely inspired poetry, Qasim Mashhadi did not adopt the penname *Diwana* but simply used it in the title of his poetic compilation to keep readers and commentators guessing about his engagement with insanity. The label of *Diwana* was applied to other poets whose oeuvres do not seem to have survived, such as Ujri Diwana and Abdullah Diwana, both in Jahangir's reign. The latter's sister was also an accomplished poet named Bibi Bedili who possibly wrote on madness.³¹⁵

The *Diwan-i Majzub* contains several odes (*qasidas*), ghazals, strophes (*tarji'bands*) and quatrains (*rubai's*) that attest to Tabrizi's spiritual attraction (*ja'zib*) and Islamic erudition.³¹⁶ Even as he goes back to the figure of Majnun to legitimize his state of madness, he punctuates every section with verses that recall his *takballus* of *Majzub*:

*With bloodshot eyes, I turned to the desert like Majnun,
With my heart's eye, I was disgraced in the valley of faith.
My sound of tumult and love passed Bisotun and Najd,
The grief of Farhad and Majnun fresh as I was disgraced.
O admonisher, don't displace this majzub from his place,
In my delusions of madness, only I become disgraced.
Again that water-capturing majzub has withdrawn,
Since the heart does not pass bloodless to seek stability.
The solution to your affairs, majzub, is from that king,
That in his name, cosmic talismans are being tied.*³¹⁷

گهی با چشم پر خون صحر گردم بر مجنون را،
گهی چون چشم دل در وادی ایمن شدم رسوا.
گذشت از بیستون و نجد عشق آوازه شوم،
غم فرهاد و مجنون تازه شد تا من شدم رسوا.
من مجذوب را بیجا مکن منع ای نصیحت گو،
توهم دانی کزین سودانه تنها من شدم رسوا...
باز آ که آب دیده مجذوب از کنار،
بیخون دل نمی گذرد چون مدار ما...
گشاد کار تو مجذوب از آن شهنشاه است،
که بسته اند بنامش طلسم دروان را.

The beginning verses here suggest a customary condemnation of madness that leads one astray, causing him to wander in deserts and be chastised by the Islamic orthodoxy for his Majnun-like behavior. Tabrizi visualizes Iranian topography in the travels of Majnun through the desolate mountains of Bisotun and Najd, simultaneously deploying the Shirin-Farhad trope to indicate his state of mental confusion and sorrow. So far so good. The shift happens when the madman becomes a *majzub*, showing that his black-bile-induced delusions (*tavahhum dani ka'zin saudana*) were but a manifestation of his religious attraction. Even as he is initially disgraced (*ruswa*) for his actions, gradually he appears to glisten with water (*ab-dida*), meaning he is illuminated by knowledge in metaphysical awakening. Tabrizi opines that this relative stability (*madar*) does not come easily, since the heart had to be bloodied and the brain frenzied many times over to reach this stage. The last verses reveal the *majzub's* divine mission, where the emperor (*shahinshah*) must recognize his spiritual merit for people around to then come and seek his blessings, tying cosmic amulets (*tilism-i dauran*) in his name.

By contrast, madness in the *Diwan-i Qasim Divana* is an articulation of the poet's deep mental confusion.³¹⁸

My house filled with the dust of displeasure, such that

بسکه از گرد کدورت خانه ما پر شد ست،

³¹⁵ Ahmad Ali Khan Hashmi Sandilah, *Makbzan al-Gharab* (Bodleian Library, Oxford University: Ms. Elliot 395), ff. 36b, 66b.

³¹⁶ Manuscript copies of the *Diwan-i Majzub* can be found in the Telangana State Central Library (Asafiya), Hyderabad (No. 3756); Asiatic Society, Kolkata (No. PSC 793); Habibganj Collection, Aligarh Muslim University (No. 47/67); Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna (No. 352); and British Museum, London (Or. 309). I have used a lithographed copy of the text (Hyderabad: Hakim Mir Nadir Ali, 1944).

³¹⁷ Tabrizi, *Diwan-i Majzub*, pp. 2-4.

³¹⁸ Manuscript copies of the *Diwan-i Qasim Divana* can be found in the National Library, Kolkata (No. 387); Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh (P.E. 7173); and British Library, London (I.O. Islamic 2320). I have used a lithograph of the text (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1877).

*My roof remains in place, even as my wall collapses.
O Qasim! My face is red with the fermentation of wine,
My pallor from bodily weakness lingers on my face.
The dust of my soul has poured out, such that
A crack has developed in the wall of my bodily cage...
It merits reason to feel pride in my discipleship,
O Qasim! [I note] today that Sa'ib was my master.
Its inaudibility makes the fate of my tongue evident,
A wave of my blood cuts across my feet like a saw.
I become a madman when my adversary is found,
My insanity hastens the onset of winter season.³¹⁹*

سقف ما بر جای ماند گر فتن دیوار ما.
نیت قاسم چهره ما سرخ تخمیر می،
رنگ ما ز ضعف تن ماندست برخسار ما.
از بسکه برون ریخت غبار نفس ما،
شد رخنه دیوار شگاف قفس ما...
سزد از عقل بشاگردی من فخر کند،
قاسم امروز که صائب بود استاد مرا.
آید ز نارسائی بخت زبون ما،
بر پای دار ازّه نهد موج خون ما.
دیوانه میشوم چو پیدا شود رقیب،
طفیان کند بفصل زمستان جنون مرا.

Using the analogy of a house to describe his corporeal being, Qasim metaphorically likens his inner chaos and discontent (*kadurat*) to the collapsing of a wall, although on the outside the roof appears intact. Recalling the idea of wine-intoxication as a catalyst for madness, his unhealthy reddish complexion bespeaks the hollowness of his soul. Its dust (*ghubar-i nafs*) trickles out of his shell, leaving him empty and drained. This feeling of despondency is contrasted by the second set of verses, where he proudly claims to have been Sa'ib Tabrizi's student, a mark of his rationality (*'aql*) that gradually devolved into insanity (*junun*). His muteness and inarticulation, mixed with the sensation of a bloody saw hacking at his feet, justifies his given moniker of madman (*divana*). It is unclear who his rival (*raqib*) is, but there is no doubt that Qasim viewed madness to be detrimental to his health with symptoms like depression, hopelessness and loss of rationality, as opposed to Tabrizi's positive conception of *majzubs* expressing madness as a marker of spiritual erudition.

The difference between Muhammad Tabrizi and Qasim Mashhadi's understandings of insanity, writing between Safavid and Mughal domains, compares to studies of madness in the Ottoman Empire. Sara Scalenghe borrows from a common Arabic saying, *al-junun funun*, meaning "insanity has many forms", to explain how impairments of the mind in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Turkey had varying manifestations, from divine madness among *majzubs* to lovesick Majnuns to mentally ill patients.³²⁰ This raises an important methodological question: when the experience of madness in the early modern Islamic world differed from person to person, how do we as postmodern readers of primary sources piece together their psychological state from poetic and philosophical works? The next section grapples with this conundrum.

The Ontology of Madness in Bedil's *Tilism-i Hairat* (1669)

We find dedicated discussions on the mind, varied mental states, and insanity in the poetry of Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil (1642-1720), a resident of Delhi living and writing through the reign of Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (r. 1658-1707). One of the most renowned poets within and beyond South Asia,³²¹ he is considered a leading example of what scholars like Muhammad Taqi Bahar called the "*sabk-i hindi*" (Indo-Persian) phase in the development of Persian literature.³²²

³¹⁹ Mashhadi, *Divan-i Qasim Divana*, pp. 3, 8.

³²⁰ Sara Scalenghe, "Ch 3: Impairments of the Mind" in *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 88-123.

³²¹ Bedil's poetry is especially popular in Afghanistan, where there is an entire field of research called *Bedil-shanasi* dedicated to the study of his works. See Khalilullah Afzali, "India's Bidel Dehlavi as National Poet of Afghanistan: The Attempt to Define a Distinct Afghani National Identity", *Lecture at the International Institute, UCLA* (May 9, 2023); and Kevin L. Schwartz, "The Local Lives of a Transregional Poet: 'Abd al-Qader Bidel and the Writing of Persianate Literary History", *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2016): 83-106.

³²² Ehsan Yarshater wanted it to be called "*sabk-i Esfahani*" to recognize the contribution of Safavid poets writing in Isfahan. See also Arthur Dudley, "Sabk-e Hendi and the Crisis of Authority in Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian Poetics", *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2016): 60-82.

Bedil's oeuvre deals with themes of philology, phenomenology, knowledge acquisition, Sufi mysticism, and literary theory. His most popular works include *Tur-i Ma'rifat* ("Manner of Gnosis"), the autobiographical *Chahar 'Unsur* ("Four Elements"), and a *diwan* that includes his *qasidas*, *masnavis*, ghazals and *rubai's*.³²³ Some of them discuss madness, like in this ghazal where he appeals to insanity as an escape from the confines of rationality and a cure for the heart's uncomfortable burden:

*Comfort broke free from the caravan of reason,
O insanity, ease the burden of my heart – help!*³²⁴

راحت از قافله هوش برون تاخته است،
ای جنون تا شود بار دلم آسان، مددی!

Among his lesser-known works is the *Tilism-i Hairat* ("Talisman of Wonder", 1669), a book-length allegorical *masnavi* detailing a world of amazement and curiosity about the body, mind, and powers of imagination. Two sections in this manuscript are important for our discussion of poetic madness here: one titled "tumult in the humoral assault of pain and indifference without fear or sadness" (*shorish-i akhlat-i hujum-i alum-o-abam bi sabab-i khauf-o-gham*), and the other titled "suffering of diseases stemming from displeasure at the misguidance of reason in maintaining temperamental health" (*zabmat-i amraz-i kadurat-i rivaj-i rahbari-yi 'aql-i salamat mi'zaj*).³²⁵ These verbose, somewhat convoluted section headings belie the deep engagement with unreason and madness that Bedil undertakes at both a poetic and a philosophical level in the *masnavi*.

*The humors emanated from royal favors,
The hot-beadedness of pleasure became my hat.
That comfort led my head to this condition,
A dormant mist became explosive sparks...
From the passion of abundant riches and grace,
The mouths open towards each other's face.
Loneliness stokes black bile all at once,
It serves to awaken the dormant insanity.
The flower of relief is separate from comfort,
Just as wild desolation is distinct from suffering.
A person's awareness does yield a jewel,
Madness does not take root in the head.
Rebellion in my name became a gemstone painting,
The sadness of freedom defined my forehead lines.
My frown has the power to form a scar,
Someone's heart does not have a scar of allegiance.
The wind of pleasure is attached to sadness,
Like the scar imprinted on the goblet of my brain.
My wildness has spread in every direction,
The shy mind of the fairy is a wave in my head.
The existence of a musical spring was a possibility,
[But] the mist of my wildness has spilled over.
The lamp of cognition extinguishes due to me,
I am the fire of the brain that burns everyone.*³²⁶

باخلاق از عنایت‌های شاهی،
چو شد سر گرمی عشرت کلاهی.
باسایش سر آمد روزگاری،
غبار خفته شد شت شراری...
ز جوش امتلای نعمت و ناز،
دهن باشد برو یکدیگر باز.
فرد انگیزی سودا بیکبار،
جنون خفته را کرد بیدار...
گل راحت ز اسایش جداست،
همین وحشت پر دبال رنجست.
ز آگاهی کسی جوهر ندارد،
که سودایی زمن در سر ندارد.
سرکشی نام من نقش نگین شد،
ز غم آزادی خط جبین شد.
بغراز من که دارد قدرت داغ،
کسی را نیست دلت بیعت داغ.
هوای عشرت با غم که دارد،
دماغ ساغر داغم که دارد.
بهر جا وحشتم در کار ست،
رم بال پری موج سر است.
بود امکان بهار هستی اهنگ،
غبار وحشت من ریخت این.
چراغ فکر از من بی فرو زد،
منم آتش دماغ هر که سوزد.

³²³ Sayyad Ahsan al-Zafar, *Mirza 'Abd al-Qadir Bedil: Hayat aur Karname: jild-i duvvum* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2009); Abdul Ghani, *Life and Works of Abdul Qadir Bedil* (Lahore: Publishers United, 1960).

³²⁴ Bedil, Ghazal No. 2856 (*Kulliyat*, 2:1334), cited in Jane Mikkelsen, "Of Parrots and Crows: Bidil and Hazin in their own words", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2017): 517. In Usman Hamid and Pasha Khan (eds.), special issue titled *Circulation and Language: Iranians in Early Modern India*.

³²⁵ Bedil, *Tilism-i Hairat* (I.O. Islamic 2395, Ethe Catalogue No. 1684, British Library, London), ff. 33a-59b.

³²⁶ *Tilism-i Hairat*, f. 34a.

These verses begin with a reference to Unani humoral (*akhlāt*) theory, which Bedil connects to imperial benevolence. Writing in the Mughal capital of Delhi, he was obliquely referring to ‘Alamgir’s power as the empire was at its largest extent yet in the late 1660s, marked by peace and justice in most parts of its realm. This robust health of the body politic should have ordinarily caused humoral equilibrium in the narrator. Instead, the pleasure (*ishrat*) derived from overall stability went to her³²⁷ head and affected her mental balance, transforming a latent fog into a fiery detonation (*shat-i sharani*). Bedil inverts the customary understanding of royal success betokening a healthy subject populace, since it was precisely the illusion of comfort (*asayish*) that fomented trouble beneath seemingly still waters. This trouble was not just psychological; in my reading, it was inherently political. The rising power of the Marathas under Shivaji following the Siege of Purandar (1665) was starting to threaten Mughal authority, discontent was brewing among Ahoms in the east against Mir Jumla’s invasion of Assam leading to the Battle of Alaboi (1669), and later the Rathor rebellion in Marwar (1679) involved ‘Alamgir’s own son, Prince Akbar, allying with the Rajputs.³²⁸ Thus, Bedil’s poetry was not divorced from its historical milieu. He may have maintained a pretense of material disengagement in cultivating what Prashant Keshavmurthy calls a “Sufi exemplum of ascetic self-government”,³²⁹ but his writing was nonetheless influenced by these developments around him. Even as abundant riches (*imtala-yi ni’mat*) were pouring into the Mughal treasury with its expanding frontiers, local kingdoms were turning on this Goliath and on each other, opening their mouths to release a volley of arrows and bullets in the heat of battle.

This backdrop helps explain the narrator’s feelings of isolation and abandonment in this overtly placid South Asian environment roiling with internecine warfare, fanning the fire of suppressed insanity (*junun-i khushta*) and excessive black bile (*sauda*). Bedil notes the wildness (*wahshat*) that overcomes the narrator which is different from the internal suffering (*rani*) she underwent earlier without letting it bubble to the surface. The façade of comfort has now been exposed, and expressing her desolation enables the flower of relief (*gul-i rahat*) to bloom. But this realization does not necessarily have a positive outcome; the manifestation of this catharsis in the form of madness (*saudayi*), albeit temporary, is violent and harmful for everyone around. Bedil uses the term *sarkashi*, which connotes both rebellion and head-attraction, to describe the mental turmoil that unravels like a precious painting (*naqsh-i nagin*) on the narrator’s mind. This inner commotion leaves a perpetual frown on her forehead, imprinting a scar so deep that even an unrequited lover’s heart cannot fathom. The narrator’s grief is immanent despite experiencing moments of happiness, conjoined by the scar embedded in the goblet-like structure of her brain (*dimagh saghir-i dagham*). Bedil thus complements his poetic illustration of madness with a neurosurgical allusion to the brain’s anatomy, where the two hemispheres of the cerebrum are held together by the corpus callosum.³³⁰ This scientific tenor continues as the narrator’s base

³²⁷ I position the narrator as female to distinguish her voice from that of Bedil, the male poet.

³²⁸ On the rise of Shivaji, see Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Identity and Memory in Western India, 1700-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); on the Ahom-Mughal conflict, see Sajal Nag (ed.), *The Mughals and the North-East: Encounter and Assimilation in Medieval India* (London: Routledge, 2023) and Kaushik Roy, “Small Wars, Ecology, and Imperialism in Precolonial South Asia: A Case Study of Mughal-Ahom Conflict, 1615-1682,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2023): 9-31; on the Rathor rebellion, see Elizabeth Thelen, *Urban Histories of Rajasthan: Religion, Politics and Society, 1550-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022) and Robert Hallissey, *The Rajput Rebellion Against Aurangzeb: A Study of the Mughal Empire in Seventeenth-century India* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977).

³²⁹ Keshavmurthy, “Chapter 1, Bidil’s portrait: Ekphrasis as ascetic self-transformation” in *Building an Ark: Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

³³⁰ In the medieval Islamic world, the Andalusian surgeon al-Zahrawi (d. 1013) wrote an Arabic medical encyclopedia, the *Kitab al-Tasrif*, where he noted the anatomy of the brain, prescribing ways to surgically treat skull fractures, subdural effusions, migraines, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy. It is not a stretch to imagine that Bedil would have had access to similar medical writings. See Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan and John L. Fox, “Al-Zahrawi and Arabian neurosurgery, 936-1013 AD”, *Surgical Neurology*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (July 1986): 92-95.

desires take over and cause harm to those around her, almost as though every brainwave (*manj-i sar*) is manipulated by a fairy's seemingly docile charms (*ram-i bal-i par*). This hints at spirit possession as another cause for escalating insanity, a confluence between the occult, medical, and literary concepts of unreason. Even though Bedil acknowledges an alternative reality where the peace and stability of life in the Mughal capital could have possibly ushered in a melodious flowering season (*imkan-i bahar, hasti-yi abang*), it is deferred by the uncontrollable wildfire of his psychological turbulence. This brain-conflagration (*atish-i dimagh*) eliminates any remnant of reason and sanity in the narrator, as the candle of her intellect (*chiragh-i fikir*) burns out.

Bedil then articulates the intensity of madness in this manner:

<i>The opium of black bile fell into your wine, Insanity brought the answer to your lips. O polluted one, you caused so much destruction, Your heart turned into a blackened mirror... The revolt of internal turmoil blinded you, Your evil eye rubs salt into the wound... The brain, misguided by the ogre of your illusion, Now imagines the black demon in its mirror.³³¹</i>	فتاد افیون سودا در شرابش، جنون بیما بلب آمد جوابش. که ای آلوده کرد تباهی، دلت آئینه رنگ سیاهی... فساد شور باطنی کرده کورت، نمک در زخم دارد چشم شورت... دماغی را که و همت غول راه است، خیال آئینه دیو سیاه است.
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This shift to the second person indicates a distancing of the narrator from her own madness, where she addresses the madperson as a separate entity, almost like an alter-ego. Referring to wine-intoxication and opium addiction as catalysts for the humoral imbalance exacerbating her mental instability, she condemns her alter-ego for voicing secrets, becoming polluted (*aluda*), and harming the lives of others around her. These actions stemming from excessive black bile cause her heart to become a blackened reflection, occluding its virtues and sanity. The moral judgment implicit here is a direct association between madness, rebellion and evil, since letting out one's inner disturbance (*shor-i batini*) in the form of misguided, mad behavior was tantamount to a pact with the devil. The notion of an evil eye (*chashm-i shor*) that brings bad luck is not only linked to the talismanic concept of *nazar* in South Asia and the Middle East today, but was also commonly referenced in contemporary Mughal sources.³³² Indeed, a surviving pair of emerald glasses allegedly belonging to Shah Jahan and meant to ward off the evil eye have recently been auctioned by Sotheby's.³³³ Bedil ends this section by suggesting the negative influence of an ogre (*ghul*) or black demon (*div-i siyah*) in clouding the brain's sense of reality, leading the alter-ego astray down the path of illusion (*vahm*) and false imagination (*khayal*). The belief in demonic possession from occult manuals and paintings discussed in the context of Zuhuri's poetry was strong seventy years later in Bedil's world as well.

The influence and diversity of spirits is recorded in a contemporary Persian encyclopedia titled '*Uqul-i 'Asharah*' ("Ten Branches of Intelligence", 1673) by Muhammad Barari Umami, the great-grandson of Majnun Khan Qaqshal, a notable commander in Akbar's army.³³⁴ The text

³³¹ *Tilism-i Hairat*, f. 35a.

³³² Shailendra Bhandare, "Rituals of power: Coinage, court culture and kingship under the Great Mughals" in *Power, Presence and Space: South Asian Rituals in Archaeological Context*, eds. Henry Albery, Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Himanshu Prabha Ray (London: Routledge, 2020).

³³³ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/arts-of-the-islamic-world-india-including-fine-rugs-and-carpets-2/a-pair-of-mughal-spectacles-set-with-emerald>. Ebba Koch observes: "The eyeglasses with lenses of emeralds may have had a more specific meaning for Shah Jahan. Emeralds were held to have miraculous healing powers and to ward off evil. For Shah Jahan, in his extreme mental state of mourning for a lost beloved, looking through emerald glasses could have been... meant to strengthen and heal his vision."

³³⁴ Qaqshal held control over Narnaul and participated in the Mughal sieges of Chittor (1568) and Gujarat (1573). Muhammad Barari wrote another text, the *Tabaqat-i Timuri* or *Mujmal-i Mufasssal*, which documents his great-grandfather's feats as well as others in the Mughal nobility. See Ms. Ouseley 311, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

contains ten chapters labelled as rationalities (*'aql*), subdivided into sections called perceptions (*fahm*), insights (*firasat*) and ingenuities (*kiyasat*). At the end of the fourth *'aql* on the terrestrial globe (*kirrat-i zamin*), the last and thirty-seventh *fahm* is on jinns and Shaitan, the Quranic equivalent of Satan. Often confused with demons (*divs*) and fairies (*paris*), the difference between a jinn and a Shaitan was that the former could die while the latter was eternal. If a jinn possessed someone in childhood (*ou ra ki ti fl bud asir karda*), the effects would be longer-lasting than in an adult. If Iblis or Shaitan captured someone from an *'ulema's* family, they were prone to uttering Satanic whisperings (*waswasa*) and the falsehoods of humankind (*batil-i khalq*). According to Barari Ummi, physicians ridiculed the existence of jinns and whoever claimed to have witnessed them. But as we have seen in multiple Unani and Ayurvedic medical texts over the preceding century and a half, this was not true; Indo-Persian *bakims* usually took spirit possession seriously as a medical issue. The *'Uqul-i 'Asharah* continues that some corporeal jinns flew in the air, while others took the form of snakes or scorpions or humans or other animals. There were female jinns as well, like the mother of Iblis. Although some people believed jinns to be ghostly apparitions of dead people, they were actually created from fire and even had genitals for reproduction (*tawalid-o-tanasul*). Some of them were angels (*malayika*) who descended from the heavens and undid the destructive work of earthly jinns. So not all jinns were bad; some were also virtuous (*akhyar*) and did not cause madness.³³⁵

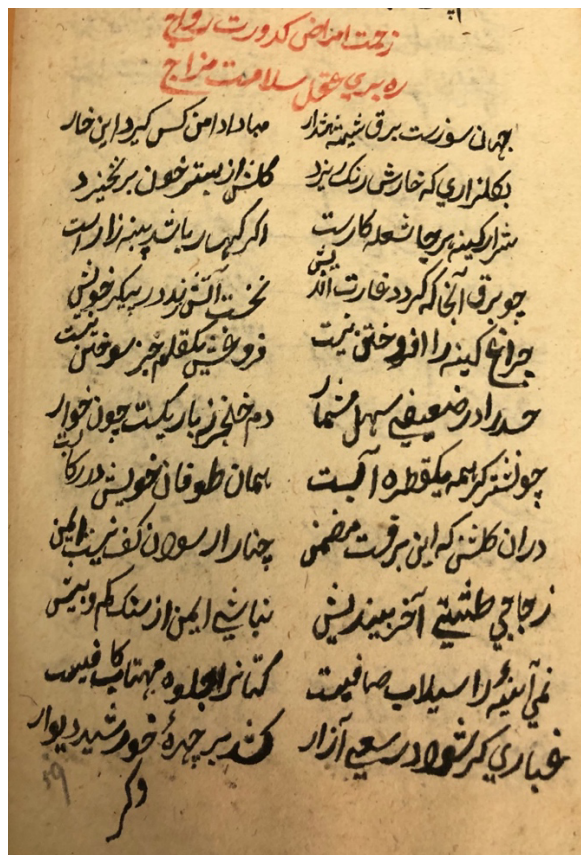


Figure 13. Beginning of the second section in Bedil's *Tilism-i Hairat*, f. 47b, 1669 (I.O. Islamic 2395, Ethel Catalogue No. 1684, British Library, London)

Tying this back to the *Tilism-i Hairat*, the ogres and black demons that Bedil condemns for misguiding people and making them delusional were closer to the Shaitan than to angels or good jinns in their detrimental impact on the brain. Jane Mikkelsen has shown how in his other

³³⁵ Muhammad Barari Ummi, *'Uqul-i 'Asharah* (Ms. Elliott. 9, Bodleian Library, Oxford University), ff. 203a-204b. Another copy of this manuscript is in the National Library of India, Kolkata (PR 222, Buhar Collection).

poetry, Bedil also highlighted the lyrical qualities of mythical creatures like the phoenix (*'anqa*) residing in the soul, building on Avicenna's philosophy to document his own ontological understanding of imagination, the mind, and the self.³³⁶

Bedil's discussion of madness continues in a second section from *Tilism-i Hairat*, titled "suffering of diseases stemming from displeasure at the misguidance of reason in maintaining temperamental health" (image above). A few folios into this section, Bedil writes:

<i>The enchantment of failure became the wind of desire, Reaching the shore from the desired object's page. From this valley, it gratified the heart's wishes, From black bile, it turned to unite with insanity. From black bile came the furor of a hundred winds, From the knee of imagination, rebellion was born. Her brain received the assistance of divinity, From the dryness of her goblet, she let out a scream. Her malignance burst forth with augmented passion, From the other humors of her head came language. The roaring in her head endured a high price, The headache of her voice endured the drum of battle. The calamity of rebellion drew poison from her side, The tumult of her head pulled out her every hair.</i>³³⁷	فسون عجز شد باد مرادش، بساحل ز ورق مطلب فتادش. ازین وادی بکام خواهش دل، بسودا چون جنون گردید واصل. بر سودا که شور صد هوا داشت، بز انوی خیال فتنه جا داشت. دماغش از ربوبیت یافت امداد، ز خشکی ساغرش بفریاد. فسادش بسکه زد جوش فرونی، ز اخلاط دگر سر زد زبونی. خروش سر گرانی چند برداشت، صداع آواز از طبل جنگ برداشت. بلای فتنه ریز آمد زهر سو، قیامت سر کشید از هرین مو.
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Bedil has now moved to describing the narrator's mental state in the third person. In her failure to be properly guided by reason, she allows her whims and desires to take over. This self-indulgence leads her to black bile-induced insanity (*ba sauda chun junun gardid vasil*), making a hundred winds blow raucously (*shor-i sad hava*) inside her head as she is tempted to go into rebellion (*fitna*) against her inner compass of sanity and logic. Thus, Bedil suggests a clear duality between reason and unreason, where divine intervention (*rabubiyat*) was required to warn the narrator about the perils of straying too far. Caught in the crosshairs of this psychological conflict, her goblet-shaped brain feels dry and wrung out, referencing the mind-numbing effects of the wine-chalice in the poetry of Zuhuri and others. She is at the end of her tether and lets out a scream to express frustration. Her repressed inner chaos (*fasadish*) finds a voice and comes rushing out, as an excess of other humors in her brain instigates and fuels her irrational behavior. The din of madness reaches a crescendo in her head (*keharosh-i sar*), a pounding headache (*sada'*) loud as battle-cries taking a toll on her mental health. She feels like tearing her hair out as this toxic, venomous rebellion (*fitna riz amad zubar*) against rationality overwhelms her completely.

Through this emotional ontology of madness, Bedil's poetry assumes an affective, empathetic tone. It describes the inner tumult and confusion of someone who feels betrayed by the confines of reason and falls deeper into the trap of madness. As scholarship on the history of emotions has observed, sensorial experiences of the brain process external stimuli by conflating the emotional and the cognitive with one's cultural or familial background. They generate reactions that get documented in primary sources and studied by historians without considering the combination of feelings, thoughts and social conditioning that produced those behaviors.³³⁸ My purpose is not to psychoanalyze historical actions but rather be more sensitive to the mental

³³⁶ Mikkelsen, "Flights of Imagination: Avicenna's Phoenix (*'Anqa*) and Bidel's Figuration for the Lyric Self", *Journal of South Asian Intellectual History*, Vol. 2 (2019): 28-72. Special issue on selfhood in the poetry and philosophy of Bidel, eds. Sajjad Rizvi and Prashant Keshavmurthy.

³³⁷ *Tilism-i Hairat*, f. 50a.

³³⁸ As representative examples of this historiography, see Rob Boddice, "Ch 6: Experience, Senses and the Brain" in *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2017).

and perceptive states that led to them without jumping to apportion blame or praise based on presentist value judgments. Bedil's writing offers a rare insight into why some seventeenth-century South Asian actors were driven to insanity, railing against societally approved rationality and working through the cacophony raging inside their brain. His poetry brings together extant medical, literary and philosophical currents to explain the suffering of severe mental distress.

An unfolding philosophical discourse around reason in early modern India served as the foil against which madness and unreason were defined. Jonardon Ganeri's work highlights Sanskrit treatises produced at the Mughal court and beyond that grappled with a movement called "new reason" (*navya nyaya*). Hindu, Jain and Muslim scholars in Navadvipa (Bengal), starting with Raghunatha (1460-1540), debated the principles of logic, reason and sanity, influenced by their respective religious traditions and the influx of European ideas on existentialism espoused by Descartes, Spinoza, Gassendi and others. During Akbar's reign, there was a robust debate on new reason between Vidyanivasa and Narayana Bhatta at the house of Raja Todar Mal in 1582. Commentaries on earlier texts were composed in subsequent decades, such as on the *Nyaya-sutra* ("Ornament of Logic") by Viswanatha, the son of Vidyanivasa, in 1634. By the 1650s, Banaras became a center for intellectual debate, led by Yasovijaya Gani. Brahmin and Jain philosophers from Banaras came into the ambit of the Mughal court in Agra due to Dara Shukoh's efforts to assemble a team to translate the Upanishads into Persian,³³⁹ as well as the initiative of Shah Jahan's poet laureate Kavindracharya Saraswati bringing the French doctor and Gassendi's disciple François Bernier in conversation with Danishmand Khan and the Banaras pundits. Kavindracharya's acquaintance was the Banaras pundit Jayarama who wrote influential texts on metaphysics and new reason titled *Padartha-mala* ("Garland of Categories", 1659) and *Nyaya-siddhanta-mala* ("Garland of Principles about Reason", 1676).³⁴⁰ It is possible that Bedil would have heard about the composition of some of these philosophical texts by word of mouth even if he did not know Sanskrit.

Bedil's *Tilism-i Hairat* was not the only Indo-Persian literary engagement with madness and unreason during the reign of 'Alamgir. Ashraf Mazandarani (1620-1704), a court poet who later became the tutor of Aurangzeb's daughter Princess Zeb-un-Nisa, abhorred the carnivalesque, needless frivolities of celebrating a festival like Holi. Recalling Zuhuri's aversion to Hindustan, Mazandarani similarly echoes a cultural dislike of some of north India's more excessive customs by terming them black bile-madness:

*Once again, the black bile of India surged,
As the custom of madness became manifest.
Slumbering sedition started to roar,
The pot of India began to boil over.*³⁴¹

باز سودای هند طغیان کرد،
رسم دیوانگی نمایان کرد.
فتنه خفته در خروش آمد،
دیگ هندوستان بجوش آمد.

It is to the oeuvre of Mulla Shah Badakhshi, a Kashmiri Sufi poet and Mazandarani's contemporary, as well as the writings of their respective imperial disciples, Jahanara and her niece Zeb-un-Nisa, to which we will now turn to understand Sufi articulations of madness in mid-to-late seventeenth-century South Asia.

³³⁹ Titled *Sirr-i Akbar* ("The Greatest Secret", 1657), Dara Shukoh's translation of the Upanishads was a standout experiment in Mughal engagement with Hindu, especially Vedantic, philosophy. See Munis Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta, and Imperial Succession in Mughal India" and Supriya Gandhi, "The Prince and the Muvaḥḥid: Dārā Shikoh and Mughal Engagements with Vedānta," both in Faruqui and Vasudha Dalmia (eds.), *Religious Interactions in Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 30-101.

³⁴⁰ Ganeri, *The Lost Age of Reason: Philosophy in Early Modern India, 1450-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁴¹ Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia* (2017), p. 174. See also Stephen Dale, "A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness: The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani", *International Society of Iranian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2003): 197-212.

Sufism and Unreason: Mulla Shah, Jahanara and Zeb-un-Nisa

Mulla Shah Badakhshi (1582-1660) was a Kashmiri saint of the Qadiri order who became the spiritual successor to Mian Mir (1550-1635) of Lahore, best known as the spiritual guide (*pir*) of Dara Shukoh and his sister Jahanara. His vision of seven different Sufi abodes of philosophy was fulfilled by Dara in the layout of the Pari Mahal in Srinagar, constructed in 1647, while the nearby *Chashma-yi Shahi* (Royal Spring) was landscaped in the Mughal *charbagh* style by Jahanara. His hospice (later *dargah*) *Khanqah-i Moula*, and the mosque associated with it, also received significant funding from Jahanara in 1651. The biography of Mulla Shah by Tavakkul Beg, titled *Nuskha-yi Ahwal-i Shahi* (1666), notes how the brother-sister duo would frequently invite him to the Mughal court in Lahore and Agra, and make annual visits to see him in Kashmir.³⁴²

The *Masnaviyat-i Mulla Shah* (1645) has a section on *divanas* that is especially instructive for an understanding of Qadiri Sufi ideas about divine-inspired madness. Titled *Risala-yi Divana* ("Treatise on Madpersons"), it begins thus:

*For me, a madperson possesses intelligence,
If the madperson's hallucinations are intelligent.
The certainty of intelligence is not madness,
The road to awareness is not the road to sagacity.
One who is devoted and happy has intelligence,
Whether they go to a mosque or wear a sacred thread.
O friend, a true Muslim is one who has intelligence,
Don't call a Muslim, one who does not recognize God.*³⁴³

مرا دیوانه دارد هوشیاری،
توهم دیوانه گر هوشیاری.
یقین هوشیاری دیوانگی نیست،
ره آگاهی ره فرزاندگی نیست.
خوشا جانی که او هوشیار باشد،
چه با مسجد چه با زنار دارد.
مسلمانی چو هوشیار یست یار،
مگو مسلم که نشناسد خدا را.

Mulla Shah dispels the notion that madpersons were without reason or intelligence (*boshyari*); rather, they were intelligent by dint of their madness. The paranoid delusions (*tawabhum*) they harbored contained nuggets of sensibility and wisdom, manifest in their uncertainty and flexibility as opposed to the stubbornness and close-mindedness that dogmatic rationality might offer. Thus, Mulla Shah warns his readers to not equate intelligence with sagacity (*farzanagi*), since awareness (*agahi*) of oneself and one's piety could come from the madness of devotion and happiness. It did not matter whether the person was Hindu or Muslim, wearing a Brahmin's sacred thread (*zunnar*) or praying in a mosque. In this sense, Mulla Shah transcends religious divides and espouses a more inclusive Sufi vision that allowed madpersons to follow their own spiritual journey. The question of a "true Muslim", for him, was not one who was necessarily well-versed in the Quran and Hadith or prayed five times a day; anyone who was sincere in their faith and belief in God could become a good Muslim, even if they were not actually followers of Islam. The only unacceptable behavior was the road of atheism when one disavowed all faiths and did not recognize God in any form (*nashanasad khuda ra*). Madness in this context became a vehicle for expressing extreme religiosity.

While Mulla Shah's opinions may appear formulaic or conventional in their liberal embrace of religious diversity, within the Qadiri *silsila*, his views on divine madness differ slightly from earlier South Asian *pirs*. For instance, half a century before this, the famous Qadiri saint 'Abd al-Haqq Muhaddis Dehlavi had written in his hagiography (*tazkira*), *Akbar al-Akhyar* ("News of the Pious Ones", 1591):

Since ... the regulation of my reason could not untie the knots [that held me down],
there was no way forward except madness.

³⁴² Murad Khan Mumtaz, "Contemplating the Face of the Master: Portraits of Sufi Saints as Aids to Meditation in Seventeenth-Century Mughal India," *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 50 (2020); Supriya Gandhi, "Ch 4: Discipleship, 1634-42" and "Ch 5: The Chosen, 1642-52" in *The Emperor Who Never Was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

³⁴³ *Masnaviyat-i Mulla Shah* (I.O. Islamic 578, Ethe Catalogue No. 1580, British Library, London), f. 216b.

Hence, wisdom must be rendered foreign/ the hands must applaud in insanity.³⁴⁴

For Dehlavi, it was the failure of reason (*'aql*) to ease his suffering that led the Sufi disciple to the path of madness. It seemed to be the only alternative once other rational means of upliftment had been exhausted. Giving up reason simultaneously meant forsaking all wisdom (*kbirad*), assuming that there was no wisdom to be found in madness. This is at odds with Mulla Shah's pronouncement, where similar to Tabrizi's *Divan-i Majzub* a decade later, intelligence was inherent in the madperson's delusions, so long as they were connected to God and actively worshipping Him. This underscores the distinction between a *majzub* and a *salik*, since the latter followed the ordained *tariqa* and comported themselves with the requisite etiquette (*adab*), but sometimes it was divine attraction (*jazb*) seizing some disciples to God that legitimized their insanity and even made it aspirational.³⁴⁵

As Mulla Shah continues in the *Risala-yi Divana*, fixing one's gaze on divine pursuits was bound to induce madness:

*How wonderfully a person of God once put it,
Your own fidelity [to God] begets guidance.
This couplet of theirs makes me a madman,
Two verses that possess such sagacity...
My madness makes me impudent,
If it is not from this, then what branch?
O flower, if you possess a brain,
Listen to the wonder of the garden-faced one...
I am moved from my place upon seeing Him,
Both intoxicated and mad from that face.
If I don't feel intoxication from that sight,
How can I shake without appearing mad?
If someone is not in motion, it is unacceptable,
If beauty is not wine-soaked, it is unacceptable.
For me, whenever someone is called a madman,
He is also intoxicated when he speaks sagaciously.
I would not call this [person] half-mad,
"Yes, I am mad, but from what angle?
If I am a stranger to that intelligence,
I am certainly unreasonable and mad."
God forbid I truly become a madman,
Becoming a stranger to that intelligence.
Intoxication fills me on seeing that angelic face,
But not the intoxication that comes from grape-wine."³⁴⁶*

چه خوش گفته یکی مرد خدایی،
بعهد خویش بوده رهنمایی.
مرا این بیت او دیوانه دارد،
دو مصراع چنین فرزانه دارد...
مرا دیوانگی گستاخ دارد،
چه از این نیست پس چه شاخ دارد...
ترا ای گل اگر باشد دماغی،
بشنو شکفت از آن رو باغ باغی...
چه از جا میروم از دیدن او،
که هم دیوانه هم مستم از آن رو.
اگر مستی نمیدارم ز دیدن،
چه می جنبم مگر دیوانه از من.
محرک گر نباشد کس نخبید،
اگر بادی نباشد حسن نخبید.
مرا هر کس که او دیوانه گوید،
مگر مست است کی فرزانه گوید.
نیم دیوانه من این را نگویم،
بلی دیوانه ام لیک از چه رویم.
از آن هشیار اگر بیگانه ام من،
یقین لایعقل و دیوانه ام من.
خدا نکند که من دیوانه باشم،
از آن هشیاری خود بیگانه باشم.
مرا مستی بود از روی آن حور،
نه آن مستی که باشد ز آب انگور.

³⁴⁴ "Chun ... az tadbir-i 'aql girahi nagashud, juz divanagi rabi nanamud.

Zin kbirad bigana mi bayad shudan/ dast dar divanagi bayad zadan."

Akhhbar al-Akhyar, ed. 'Alim Ashraf Khan (Tehran: Cultural Heritage Society or Anjuman-i Asar wa Mafakbir-i Farhangi, 1383 SH/ 2004): 624-25. See also Scott Kugle, "Abd al-Haqq Dihlawi, An Accidental Revivalist:

Knowledge and Power in the Passage from Delhi to Makka", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2008): 196-246.

³⁴⁵ On the historical evolution of *majzubs* as a category distinct from *saliks* between the tenth and sixteenth centuries, see Arin Salamah-Qudsi, "The Concept of *jadhb* and the Image of *majdhub* in Sufi Teachings and Life in the Period between the Fourth/Tenth and the Tenth/Sixteenth Centuries," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Series 3*, 28, 2 (2018): 255-71.

³⁴⁶ *Masnaviyat-i Mulla Shah*, ff. 218a-b.

Compared to the poetry of Bedil, Zuhuri or even those reconfiguring the Layla-Majnun trope, Mulla Shah has a relatively direct and easier style of writing. He treats insanity not as a philosophical riddle or incomprehensible mental illness, but as a mischief-maker (*diwanagi mara gustakh darad*) begetting absurd actions that were manifestations of divine wisdom. Attempts to visualize the face of Allah led the seeker to move involuntarily like a madman and a drunkard (*hum divana hum mastam*); to maintain composure and not be affected by the wine-like beauty of His visage was unacceptable. Madness was therefore inseparable from intoxication and sagacity; to dismiss the madperson's behavior as meaningless or irrational (*la-yi-'aql*) was to miss the intelligence (*hoshyari*) blessed by God that motivated him. Some of these were of course established literary conventions going back to Firdausi, Rumi and Hafez, but Mulla Shah's poetic innovation needs to be understood in terms of his Qadiri affiliation and close association with Mughal circles, especially his mentorship of Dara and Jahanara.

Jahanara's own works of poetry, the *Munis al-Arwah* ("Solace of the Souls", 1640) and *Risala-yi Sahibiyya* ("Treatise of the Princess", 1641), reflect a Sufi engagement with unreason and madness. *Munis al-Arwah* is a study of the Chishti *silsila*. While the first half is a hagiography of its founding saint Muinuddin Chishti of Ajmer (d. 1236), his miracles, hospice and followers, the second half outlines the lives of his disciples and successors down to Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) and Nasiruddin Chiragh-i Dehli (d. 1356). The text demonstrates Jahanara's knowledge of the Sufi tradition and its historical evolution, even as she adopts a reverential tone in her writing as a Chishti disciple, calling herself a *faqira* (spiritual beggar). She ends with an account of her own pilgrimage to Muinuddin Chishti's *dargah* in Ajmer in 1634, where after circumambulating the Sufi master's tomb at dusk, she had an epiphany that temporarily altered her mental state:

At that moment, a marvelous spiritual state and mystical experience befell this annihilated one, which cannot rightly be written. From extreme longing I became astonished, and I do not know what I said or did.³⁴⁷

Jahanara's second work, the *Risala-i Sahibiyya*, records her conversations with Mulla Shah, to whom she was drawn after her brother Dara's initiation.³⁴⁸ In so doing, she engaged with mystical unreason and mental confusion, both as divinely inspired ecstasy and as a psychological condition.³⁴⁹ After Dara became Mulla Shah's disciple in 1635, Jahanara began focusing on his portrait given by Dara and, on one occasion, was sitting under a tree when she saw Mulla Shah's reflection pass by. She could not look at him directly since Sufi protocol prohibited women from talking to men. As she read the Quran, Jahanara felt Mulla Shah's shadow fall on her and in that moment, she experienced an ecstasy unbeknownst to humankind. She then had a vision of Prophet Muhammad convincing her to change her affiliation from Chishti to Qadiri. These couplets from the *Risala-yi Sahibiyya* attest to her ecstatic madness on seeing both the Prophet and Mulla Shah:

[Mulla] Shah, you with your purity make it possible,
For students to reach God under your graceful glance...

شاه تو آنکه می رساند ز صفا،
فیض نظر تو طالبان را بخدا...

³⁴⁷ Nausheen Jaffery, *Jahan Ara Begum: A Biographical Study (1614-1681)* (New Delhi: Idara-yi Adabiyat-i Dehli, 2011), p. 130; Qamar Jahan Begam, *Princess Jahan Ara Begum: Her Life and Works* (Karachi: SM Hamid Ali, 1950), pp. 46-48. The Persian original in the *Munis al-Arwah*, cited by the latter, p. 121, goes:

"در آن وقت عجیب حالتی و ذوقی به این فانیه روی داد که به تحریر راست نمی آید. از نهایت شوق سر اسیمه شده بودم، نمی دانستم که چه گویم و چه کنم."

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Afshan Bokhari, "The 'Light' of the Timuria: Jahanara Begum's Patronage, Piety, and Poetry", *Marg*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (2008): 53-61; Andrea Butenschön, *The Life of a Mogul Princess: Jahanara Begum, Daughter of Shahjahan* (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1931).

³⁴⁹ Bokhari, "Masculine Modes of Female Subjectivity: The Case of Jahanara Begum", in Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (eds.), *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

*The beloved came to my side without the sorrow of nights of separation,
I was a mad lover, my ardent desire rewarded me.*³⁵⁰ یار آمد در بغل بی محنت شبهای حجر،
عاشق دیوانه بودم اشتیاقم داد اجر.

Indeed, Afshan Bokhari argues that by the late 1640s, Jahanara's acquired spiritual erudition led her to achieve the status of *piri-muridi*, where she was no longer a disciple and ready to become a Sufi master in her own right but was denied this position because of her gender.³⁵¹

We can compare Mulla Shah and Jahanara's views on madness with those of the latter's niece, Zeb-un-Nisa (1638-1702), in her book of Sufi poetry, the *Diwan-i Makhfi* (c.1690). As Aurangzeb's favorite child, Zeb-un-Nisa enjoyed a high position at the Mughal court, known for becoming a *hafiza* by age seven and a poet par excellence who often organized literary assemblies (*musbairas*) by calling Persian poets from Iran, Central Asia, and other parts of South Asia, in addition to theologians, scholars, scribes and calligraphers. Her library was remarkably large, and she employed Mulla Safiuddin Ardabili in Kashmir to translate a commentary on the Quran from Arabic (*Tafsir-i Kabir*) to Persian, titling it *Zeb-ut-Tafsir* ("Ornament of Commentaries"). However, the *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri* reports that in 1681, Aurangzeb discovered letters exchanged between her and her brother Muhammad Akbar during the Rathor rebellion. Suspecting her of assisting the rebellious prince and his Rajput allies in plotting against him, her father's fury knew no bounds. Zeb-un-Nisa's fall from grace was dramatic as Aurangzeb stopped her annual pension of four lakh rupees, confiscated her property, and ordered her to be imprisoned in the Salimgarh Fort in Delhi, where she remained for over two decades till her death in 1702.³⁵² It was in solitary confinement that she wrote most of her *diwan*, adopting the penname *Makhfi* (meaning the veiled or hidden one) to modulate her textual agency while remaining in purdah. These verses are attributed to her but scholars do not agree on the veracity of her authorship; some argue that the poems in the *Diwan-i Makhfi* are not all by her; they are interspersed with verses by a poet from that same period (albeit a male one). She also wrote a work of elegant prose titled *Zeb al-Munsha'at* ("Ornament of Epistolary Writings") that has not survived.³⁵³

It was perhaps the act of writing in solitary confinement that shaped Zeb-un-Nisa's engagement with poetic madness. I argue that her *Diwan-i Makhfi*³⁵⁴ marks a significant juncture in the coagulation of Indo-Persian literary trends around unreason and insanity unfolding over the preceding century. It incorporated elements of wine-intoxication, lovesickness, psychological tumult, philosophical irrationality, and Sufi wisdom, thus tying together the literary output of Zuhuri, Zulali, Akbarabadi, Nau'i, Panipati, Riza'i, Kashani, Majzub Tabrizi, Qasim Diwana, Bedil, Mazandarani, Mulla Shah and Jahanara. I am not suggesting that she necessarily read all these poets and used them as references to guide her own writing. Rather, in the first half of her life, the Mughal princess acquired an extraordinary breadth of poetic knowledge, embedded in a

³⁵⁰ Jahanara (ed. Muhammad Aslam), *Risala-yi Sahibiyya*, *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1979): 99, 109-110.

³⁵¹ Bokhari, "Between patron and piety: Jahān Ārā Begam's Sufi affiliations and articulations in seventeenth-century Mughal India," in *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800*, eds. John Curry and Erik Ohlander (New York: Routledge Sufi Series, 2012), pp. 131-153.

³⁵² Saqi Musta'id Khan (trans. Jadunath Sarkar), *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzeb-'Alamgir (reign 1658-1707)* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1947), pp. 126, 275, 322-3.

³⁵³ Muzaffar Alam, "Ch 7: Piety, Poetry, and the Contested Loyalties of Mughal Princesses, c. 1635-1700" in *The Mughals and the Sufis: Islam and Political Imagination in India, 1500-1750* (New York: SUNY Press, 2021), pp. 259-319; Annie Krieger-Krynicky, *Captive Princess: Zebunissa, Daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Tahera Azmat, "Zeb-un-Nissa", *Women Mentors of Men* (Ujjain: Siddharth Prakashan, 1970), pp. 79-87; Jadunath Sarkar, "Zeb-un-Nissa", *Studies in Mughal India* (Calcutta: MC Sarkar & Sons, 1919), pp. 79-90.

³⁵⁴ A partial translation of fifty ghazals from the *Diwan-i Makhfi* was done by Magan Lal and Jessica Duncan Westbrook (1913). I have chosen to study a more complete version in the British Library, although many of her original 423 ghazals have been lost to us. See Zeb-un-Nisa, *Diwan-i Makhfi*, Or. 311 (British Museum, London); transliterated and translated by P. Whalley, I.O. Islamic 4587 (British Library, London). I thank Ursula Sims-Williams for directing me to this text.

rich literary milieu over three decades and influenced by her aunt Jahanara and uncle Dara. This combined deftly with her fraught relationship with her father post-1681, existential angst and isolation being trapped in Salimgarh Fort without company, and deprivation of her royal position and economic fortunes, to produce a sense of betrayal and dejection leading to her lyrical exploration of madness.



Figure 14. Portrait of Zeb-un-Nisa holding a Flower
Mughal album, c.1680, Lewis M 348
© Free Library of Philadelphia, PA



Figure 15. Daughter of 'Alamgir with a Parakeet
Golconda, c.1670-1700
© Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

In the verses below from the *Diwan-i Makhfi*, Zeb-un-Nisa undertakes a careful self-fashioning by appropriating the Layla-Majnun trope to mold her own identity. She treads a tightrope between demonstrating familiarity with literary tradition and inserting her personal travails with sorrow and insanity:

*Like Majnun, stepping resolutely into the valley of sorrow,
O Makhfi, I sealed a fresh pact and promise of love...
From Layla's grief in the desert of love, the desiring hand
Sprinkled dust on Majnun's head till resurrection day.
Men who turn lovers incur the reproach of madness,
The comprehending eye sees the light bestowed by love...
Though I am like Layla, my heart is giddy like Majnun's,
I turn my head to the desert, but modesty shackles my feet.
So much did I share the burden of my grief with the world,
[That] it dyed my robe blue, behold, its skin is hypocritical.
Though I am a king's daughter, I have become a beggar,*

چو مجنون از سر همت قدم در وادی غم نه،
که بستم تازه، مخفی، بمحبت عهد و پیمان را...
از غم لیلی بصرای محبت دست شوق،
تا قیامت بر سر مجنون فشانند خاک را.
مرد عاشق پیشه را دیوانگی تهمت بود،
نور می بخشد محبت دیده ادراک را...
گرچه من لیلی اساسم، دل چو مجنون در هواست،
سر بصرای می زنم، لیکن حیا زنجیر پاست.
بسکه بار غم بیرون انداختم بر روزگار،
جامه نیلی کرده، اینک، بینکه پوست او دوتاست.
دختر شاهم، و لیکن رو بفقر آورده ام،

Deploying the customary language of Layla and Majnun's separation transforming into madness, Zeb-un-Nisa articulates her psychological distress in the garb of lovesickness, perhaps due to her imprisonment and removal from a Mughal courtly milieu. The possibility of her having a love affair is suspect, since no source except Manucci suggests any liaisons with other men. Rumors of her association with 'Aqil Khan, the governor of Lahore, and the Maratha commander Shivaji abound, but both are probably untrue.³⁵⁶ She allows her Majnun-like wildness to grow even as she risked the defamation of madness (*divanagi tuhmat buvad*) and admits that her gender would make comparison with Layla more suitable. The imagery of feet shackled connotes both the chains used to restrain a violent madperson and Zeb-un-Nisa's own sense of claustrophobia, loneliness, and inner tumult being trapped inside Salimgarh Fort. When she finally expresses her sorrow to those around her, they pretend to empathize,³⁵⁷ but she can see through their hypocrisy. Her attendants were possibly loyal to Aurangzeb and could not realistically do much to alleviate her situation. This autobiographical tone in her poetry is confirmed in her lament that despite being the Mughal emperor's daughter (*dukhtar-i shaham*), she had to suffer in dire poverty. Invoking her sister Zinat-un-Nisa, she claims to be an amalgam of both siblings as she states her name, which means ornament among women, a reminder of her royal status despite her incarceration. She was trying to reclaim her pride in humiliating circumstances.³⁵⁸

Other couplets in the *Divan-i Makhfi* betray a more Sufi-inclined understanding of madness, mingled with alcoholic inebriation and philosophical unreason:

*Till Your coquettish endearments grow daily on my heart,
All my reflections tend to disgrace, my thoughts to insanity.
Whoever took wine to their lips in the assembly of love,
Is never sober again even if they were the Plato of the age.
Reason is overshadowed by excess insanity, courage wanes,
The cry "I am Truth!" rang loudly, where are the takers?
With one glance of Your eye, Makhfi became a madperson,
Before Your intoxicating eyes, it is difficult to be sensible.
The path of reason is joyless in the company of madmen,
How can you seek health while facing the drunk wise man?
O Makhfi, you endeared sensibility by the grace of insanity,
Conversing like a drunk madman with wisdom beloved.*³⁵⁹

تا شیوه نازت به دلم روز افزون ست،
فکرم همه رسوایی و اندیشه جنون ست...
هر که در بزم محبت باده بر لب نهاد،
گر فلاطون زمان است، تا ابد هوشیار نیست...
عقل مغلوب و جنون غالب و بس هوسها تنگ،
گرمه شد داد انا الحق کشش دار کجاست...
یک نظر دیده ترا، مخفی، و شد دیوانه ای،
پیش چشم مست تو هوشیار بودن مشکل ست...
نیست در صحبت دیوانه راه عقل طرب،
عاقبت می طلبی رو بر فرزانه مست؟...
مخفی از فیض جنون شیوه هوشیاری گرفت،
با خرد یار کند صحبت دیوانه مست.

This is a more directly spiritual take on madness, where Zeb-un-Nisa explains how the Sufi path of love made her feel closer to God. Similar to Mulla Shah and Jahanara, she perceives insanity as a state of heightened metaphysical wisdom that was intimately tied with wine-intoxication. Reason (*'aql*) was shrouded by overpowering madness in this state that rendered even the most

³⁵⁵ Zeb-un-Nisa, *Divan-i Makhfi* (I.O. Islamic 4587), pp. 22, 43, 94.

³⁵⁶ Sunil Sharma, "Forbidden Love, Persianate Style: Reading Tales of Iranian Poets and Mughal Patrons", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 5 (2009): 765-779; Jadunath Sarkar, "Zeb-un-Nissa's Love Affairs", *Studies in Mughal India* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1920), 79-90.

³⁵⁷ *Jama nili kardā*, lit. "dyed her robes blue", meaning put on a mourning act. See *Sulayman Hayyim New Persian-English Dictionary*, p. V1-0528 (https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/hayyim_query.py?page=528).

³⁵⁸ Although in solitary confinement, Zeb-un-Nisa continued to wield authority in royal circles and held the title of Padshah Begum. In 1697, she appointed Sa'dullah Khan as her *Khan-i Saman* ("head of household"), and later signed a letter to release him from her nephew Farrukh Siyar's invading forces in Delhi. When he was killed despite the letter, Zeb-un-Nisa apparently expressed her grievances to Farrukh Siyar and the Saiyyid brothers. See Shahnawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, *Ma'athir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, trans. H. Beveridge and Baini Prashad (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1952), pp. 644, 646.

³⁵⁹ Zeb-un-Nisa, *Divan-i Makhfi*, pp. 97-100, 110, 128.

rational people who embodied Platonic equilibrium senseless. Zeb-un-Nisa recalls Mansur al-Hallaj's ecstatic cry, *Ana al-Haq*, meaning "I am God!" or "I am the Truth!", which had gotten him hanged for heresy in tenth-century Baghdad.³⁶⁰ While Zuhuri and Bedil had linked drunkenness to an embrace of irrationality and veering away from the ordained path of reason, Zeb-un-Nisa goes a step further in relating this to being confronted with divine reality. This was also perhaps a way for her to meditate on God's face and escape from the desolation of solitary confinement. The elegance of madness (*faiẓ-i junun*) guides her in navigating the boundary between rationality and unreason with wisdom (*kebirad*) in her pursuit of God.

Zeb-un-Nisa's Sufi affiliation is worth considering in light of her discussion of divine madness. While in the company of Jahanara and Dara, she became a Qadiri initiate. Aurangzeb together with his sister Roshanara made an active effort to wean his daughter away and get her to engage with the Naqshbandi *silsila*, but she refused. Muzaffar Alam has studied three surviving correspondences, one between Zeb-un-Nisa and Shaikh Muhammad Naqshband in 1684, and two between her and Shaikh 'Abd al-Ahad Wahdat, a grandson of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, from 1686.³⁶¹ The latter exchange is of particular interest, since the Sufi tried to console the princess about living out the rest of her days in solitude by discussing the experience of grief and insanity. He encouraged her to embrace the pain – having tested the path of far-sighted reason, it was now time for make oneself fall into madness (*azmudam 'aql-i dur andish ra, ba'd az in divana saẓam kehwish ra*). Perhaps this was a ploy for the Naqshbandi saint to attract Zeb-un-Nisa to his order and convince her to give up her Qadiri affiliation, but it does not seem to have worked.³⁶²

Conclusion

By the late-seventeenth century, madness and unreason were clearly major themes in Indo-Persian poetry. These poets in the Mughal Empire and Deccan Sultanates crafted a new literary vocabulary for insanity, building on a complex web of tropes including the Layla-Majnun legend, wine-intoxication, jinn possession, philosophical irrationality, psychological instability, and Sufi wisdom. Through studying their poetry in conjunction with evolving medical and occult knowledge as well as paintings and anecdotes in court chronicles during the reigns of Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb 'Alamgir, we are able to trace repeated literary patterns as well as changes over time that went beyond merely characterizing madness in scientific parlance as mental illness or in social terms as deviance. Investigating the mindscapes of these writers, their historical milieu, and engagement with classical Persian as well as contemporary Indian poetics enables us to grapple with how their personal lives and inhabited contexts intersected with their discussions of insanity and senselessness.

Each of the poets discussed in this chapter offers us a unique conceptualization of madness in early modern South Asia. Zuhuri's *Saqinama*, written in the Deccan, deployed insanity as a marker of extreme wine-inebriation, closely linked with jinn possession in dream interpretation and demonology manuals, mental illnesses like oblivion and lovesickness described in Unani and Ayurvedic texts, music therapy as a cure, and loss of self-control. Reconfigurations of the Layla-Majnun trope in *Chah-i Visal*, *Akbhar al-Asfiya*, *Suz-o-Gudaz*, *Masnavi-yi Ram-o-Sita*, *Ziba-Nigar*, *Kulliyat-i Kalim Kashani*, *Divan-i Majzub*, and *Divan-i Qasim Divana* reflect an adaptation of love-madness to changing Iranian and north Indian customs and environs. By contrast, Bedil's *Tilism-i Hairat* assumes an affective, ontological tone to describe the inner tumult and psychological confusion of a patient of madness, struggling with demons and exploring the blurred lines between sanity and irrationality, against the socio-political backdrop of 1660s Delhi. Finally, the *Masnaviyat-i Mulla Shah*, *Risala-yi Sabibiyya*, and *Divan-i Makbfi*

³⁶⁰ For more on al-Hallaj, see Herbert I.W. Mason, *al-Hallaj* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995); Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985).

³⁶¹ Alam, Chapter 7 in *The Mughals and the Sufis*, pp. 309-319.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 320-330.

encapsulate a positive notion of divine madness inspired by the path of Sufi love, while containing glimpses of their personal lives and struggles.

When woven together, these seemingly disparate poetic manuscripts speak to each other in surprising ways and reveal a dynamic world of literary “fresh-speaking” (*taẓa-gu’i*) that cannot be dismissed as recycling earlier Persian tropes, but rather constantly innovating and experimenting to develop new ways of discussing unreason and insanity. A lot of this poetry is verbose, esoteric and seemingly formulaic, often frustrating historians looking for an easy story of change over time replete with hair-raising anecdotes. But in closely reading, translating and analyzing these Mughal, Deccani and Safavid writings, I have tried to convey a sense of their rich tone and texture, vigorous engagement with madness and irrationality, and changing historical context, especially when juxtaposed with contemporary medical manuals, occult treatises, court chronicles, paintings, and other genres of texts.

Taking this story of madness in Mughal India forward, in the next chapter I will explore ethico-legal notions of insanity during the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb ‘Alamgir (1628-1707). I will study why mental illnesses challenged norms of moral conduct in *akbalaq* treatises, how compendia of Hanafi jurisprudence (*fiqh*) laid down laws for dealing with insane accused or convicts, to what extent actual court cases followed or contravened these legal digests in either punishing or exonerating madpersons on trial, and how they paralleled medical developments in Unani and Ayurvedic manuscripts from ‘Alamgir’s reign.

Chapter 4: Madness as Ethico-Legal Incapacity **Defining Insanity in *Akhlaq*, Politics, Jurisprudence, and Medicine, 1620-1708**

The *Padshahnama* (“Book of the Grand King”, 1656) of Muhammad Waris, the official chronicle of Shah Jahan’s reign (r. 1628-58), recounts an incident at the emperor’s newly established court in Delhi when a noble named Jairup Meerutiya breached imperial protocol. One day in February 1654, the upstart, who belonged to an order called the *Bandagan-i Atbahwala* (“Servants of the Mango-Seller”), suddenly grabbed a sword and ran to climb the staircase to the royal portico (*aiman*), presumably to attack a member of the royal family. The author notes that Jairup, who was “hare-brained and had an excess of insanity” (*dar shorish wa niramgi-yi junun dashta*), was stopped in his tracks by the magistrate (*kotwal*) Naubat Khan and struck with a log to his chest. Unfazed, this “hunter of calamity” (*nakhchir-i musibat*) picked himself up and attempted to climb the staircase again. Another noble named Khwaja Rahmatullah now unsheathed his sword and stabbed him multiple times. That “debased jewel” was prevented from executing his murderous plan and died from his wounds. Eventually, both Naubat Khan and Khwaja Rahmatullah were given increments to their *mansab* (rank) in recognition of their bravery.³⁶³

Prima facie, this account of a murderous noble being dismissed as mad for daring to attack the emperor might appear in sync with earlier representations of political rebels in the Mughal Empire. However, this surface reading ignores the ethico-legal undertones to the charge of insanity that Jairup and others like him were increasingly facing through the reign of Shah Jahan. By addressing him as hare-brained and possibly not in control of his senses, the author of this chronicle, Muhammad Waris, hints at his inability to think or act rationally, rendering him an object of pity and ridicule rather than an evil machinator who was fully conscious of his actions. Ironically, Waris was himself killed in 1680 by a student afflicted with black-bile madness (*talib-i ilm-i saudayi*) and wielding a pen-knife.³⁶⁴

In this chapter, I will argue that there was a gradual shift towards understanding madness as legal incapacity over the mid-to-late seventeenth century in South Asia, undergirded by ethical understandings of irrationality and unreason as well as advancing medical knowledge about mental illnesses. The use of “madness” in both these cases to describe the murderous culprits was not incidental or casual; rather, it signaled a more careful, delimited use of this category to describe people of unsound mind, reflecting an intersection of Indo-Persian philosophical, jurisprudential, and scientific understandings of brain disorder. Starting at the end of Jahangir’s reign (r. 1605-27) and culminating after the end of Aurangzeb ‘Alamgir’s (r. 1658-1707), I will show how there were concerted scholarly efforts across north India and the Deccan to define insanity and allied mental illnesses in more accurate terms than previous medical experts (*bakims*), jurists (*fugha*), or lexicon-writers (*farhang-navisan*) had done.

There are four sections in this chapter that discuss madness across different genres of texts. The first trawls through three Persian ethical (*akhlaq*) treatises that predated the early modern period and were produced mostly in Iran, but deeply impacted Mughal notions of insanity. I study the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, *Akhlaq-i Jalali* and *Akhlaq-i Mohsini* for references to irrationality and madness to understand their moral, philosophical and affective connotations. The second section follows Mughal and Deccani chronicles and documents to piece together a changing discourse of madness from political rebellion to legal incapacity. From the intra-military disagreements among Mughal officers in Bengal and Assam in the 1620s and the decapitation of the Afghan noble Khan Jahan Lodi, to the appointment of revenue land-holders (*jagirdars*) in the Deccan and the heresy trial of the Jewish unorthodox saint Sarmad in 1660, I

³⁶³ Muhammad Waris, *Padshahnama*, trans. Ishrat Ansari and HA Qureshi (New Delhi: *Idara-yi Adabiyat-i Dehli*), pp. 224-5. For the original Persian, see *Ahwal-i Shahzadgi-i Shah Jahan* or *Padshahnama, Jild-i Sirum* (Kolkata: National Library of India), pp. 278-9.

³⁶⁴ I will return to this story in the third section of this chapter, comparing it with an account of the insanity defense in a contemporary legal treatise, the *Fatava-yi ‘Alamgiri* (c. 1675).

trace the gradual shift towards a more juristic understanding of madness. This is most evident in the third section, where I work through the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, a Hanafi legal compendium that detailed the possible conditions for madpersons to perform their religious Muslim obligations like ablutions (*wuḥu*), prayer (*namaḥ*) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), as well as the applicability of the insanity defence in civil cases of marriage, guardianship, divorce, and in criminal cases of murder. In the fourth and final section, I read Indo-Persian lexicons (*farhangs*) alongside Unani and Ayurvedic treatises produced under 'Alamgir to discern a parallel intensification of medical acumen about epilepsy, encephalitis, melancholia and demonic possession.

Madness in the Normative Ethical (*Akhlaq*) Tradition

In order to understand the philosophical underpinnings of irrationality and its overlaps with the unfolding medico-legal discourse of insanity in Mughal India, in this first section I will trace the manner in which madness was discussed in the Persian *akhlaq* tradition. As Linda Darling has highlighted, Perso-Arabic treatises in the 'mirror for princes' genre served as ethical models for South Asian rulers as early as the Delhi Sultans in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries and reified by Mughal and Deccani royalty three centuries later.³⁶⁵ In accordance with the philosophy of the early Mu'tazilites, the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* and its derivative expositions valorized the principles of reason ('*aqḥ*) and justice ('*adḥ*) above all else.³⁶⁶ In some cases, the lack of reason was thought to connote a descent into insanity, while in others, it was the medical proclivity for disease that precipitated it.³⁶⁷ I will begin by analyzing discussions of madness in three *akhlaq* treatises from medieval Persia to then understand their impact on early modern South Asia, as well as the gradual shifts in this tradition.

The *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* ("Nasirean Ethics", 1235) by Nasir al-Din Tusi was one of the foundational treatises of the *akhlaq* tradition, widely cited in Mughal and Deccani circles as a manual for the ideals of moral, political, religious, and social comportment. Its didactic style was interspersed with words of wisdom (*bikmat*) from Islamic prophets, leaders and scholars, as well as anecdotes (*bikayat*) from classic texts of philosophy, theology and poetry.³⁶⁸ It was written for the Naziri Ismaili prince Nasir al-Din 'Abd al-Rahim in the face of Mongol invasions in Quhistan. Loosely based on Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahḥib al-Akhlaq* ("Refinement of Ethics", 1030), Tusi also drew inspiration from al-Farabi's *Ihsa al-'Ulum* ("Enumeration of the Sciences", c.900) and Ibn Sina's *Al-Isyarat wal-Tanbihat* ("Remarks and Admonitions", c.1000), and to a lesser extent from the writings from al-Kindi, al-Balkhi, Ibn Rushd and al-Ghazali, all of which in turn built on Aristotelean and Neoplatonic philosophies.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁵ Darling, "Do Justice, Do Justice, For That is Paradise: Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 22, No. 1&2 (2002): 3-19.

³⁶⁶ George F Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); Majid Fakhry, "Chapter Seven: Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274)" in *Ethical Theories in Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1994), pp. 131-142.

³⁶⁷ Rachel Rose Petrarca, "Madness in Islam: Cultural Dimensions and Medical Knowledge from the Medieval to the Postcolonial", *Bard College Senior Projects* (Spring 2022).

³⁶⁸ On the discursive precedents set by *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, see Wilferd Madelung, "Nasir al-Din Tusi's Ethics: Between Philosophy, Shi'ism and Sufism" in *Ethics in Islam* (Undena Publications, 1985); Herman Landolt, "Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Isma'ilism, and Ishraqi Philosophy" in *Nasir ad-Din Tusi: Philosophe et Savant du XIII Siècle*, ed. R. Pourjavady and Ž. Vesel (Tehran: Presses Universitaire d'Iran and Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 2000); and Mohammad Azadpur, "On the Philosophical Shi'ism of Nasir ad-Din Tusi", *The Maghreb Review*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (2018): 140-153. On the treatise's significance in Mughal India, see Muzaffar Alam, "Ch 2: Akhlaqi Norms and Mughal Governance", *The Making of Indo Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, edited by Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000); Alam, "Ch 2: Shari'a, Akhlaq and Governance", *The Languages of Political Islam in India, 1200-1800* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 46-61; Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Tracing Sources of Principles of Mughal Governance: A Critique of Recent Historiography", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 37, No. 5/6 (2009): 45-54.

³⁶⁹ Majid Fakhry, "Chapter Three: Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic Tendencies: Al-Farabi (d. 950), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198)" and "Chapter Six: Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh (d. 1030), Chief Moral Philosopher

Tusi's *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri* developed a theory of psychology of the soul (*ruh-i nafsanī*) that stressed the need for positive mental health to ensure physical well-being. It was necessary to not give into base desires for instant gratification of the soul (*al-nafs al-ammara*), which was thought to engender avarice leading to mental illness and distract one from pursuing the ideal virtues.³⁷⁰ In a section on “distinguishing virtue from other values that seem akin to it”, Tusi identifies courage (*shujaʿat*) as a virtue and writes that those who were truly courageous resisted the temptations of the soul and held an appropriate fear of calamities and disasters. On the other hand, those who indulged in excesses or abominations, and remained unperturbed by perilous visitations of natural disasters, chronic sickness, or the death of friends and family, were in danger of losing all honor and modesty. This latter category of people was therefore closer to “madness and impudence” (*junun-o-waqabat*) than to courage.³⁷¹

Further, in outlining a theory of rational moralistic behavior, the *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri* detailed how certain egregious emotions could tend to madness. In a section on “treatments for diseases of the soul”, Nasir al-Din Tusi suggested that excessive anger could indicate either overwhelming passion or constant grief, leading to both physical and psychological effects on the body, including agitation, trembling, pallor, and emaciation. Disorders of the brain could have soul-altering consequences, such as a diminished ability to discern (*nuqsan-i tamiz*), corruption of the imagination (*fasad-i takhayyul*), and failure to utilize one's faculties and habits (*taqsir dar qavi-o-malakāt*).³⁷² Tusi then discusses anger as a form of momentary madness, and quotes the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, as saying: “Vehemence is a species of madness, for its author has regrets, and if he does not regret, then his madness is firmly established.”³⁷³ If this anger were to tend to depravity, the person could become violent, threatening to empty the ocean and fill it with mountains. According to Ibn Sina, there was once a poet who became afflicted by the moon and become furious, hurling insults and abuses at it, even writing satires to lampoon it.³⁷⁴

Tusi notes that, like anger, grief (*ḥaẓn*) was also an emotion whose excess could lead to psychical debility. Excessive grief was a psychical pain (*alami-yi nafsanī*) whose root cause was either the death of a loved one or disappointment due to failure. As treatment for the latter, Tusi prescribes remaining content in one's profession of choice, such as a trader in business, a carpenter in carpentry, a rebel in disobedience, a catamite (*mukḥannas*) in sodomy, and a pimp in procuring. Those who remained ignorant of their own proclivities or of the discipline to commit to their profession were “utterly insane” (*majnūn ʿala atlaq*) and therefore given to experiencing extreme sorrow.³⁷⁵

The second major *akḥlaq* treatise that found currency in early modern South Asia (as well as in Safavid Iran) was Jalaluddin Muhammad Dawani's *Akḥlaq-i Jalali* (1477).³⁷⁶ It was patronized by the Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan and his son Sultan Khalil in Shiraz, then part of Fars province.³⁷⁷ Patterned on Tusi's doctrinal model, the *Akḥlaq-i Jalali* contains a distinct

of Islam” in *Ethical Theories in Islam* (1994), pp. 78-92, 107-30.

³⁷⁰ Karim Mitha, “Conceptualising and addressing mental disorders amongst Muslim communities: Approaches from the Islamic Golden Age”, *Transcult Psychiatry* (2020), Vol. 57, No. 6: 763–774; Sameer Ansari and Naved Iqbal, “Contributions of Muslim medieval scholars to psychology”, *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2023): 308-333.

³⁷¹ Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri*, eds. Mujtaba Minavi and Alireza Haydari (Tehran: Shirkat-i Siḥami-yi Khwarizmi), p. 128; GM Wickens (trans. ed.), *The Nasirean Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge Library Editions: Iran, Vol. 23, 1964), p. 93.

³⁷² Tusi, *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri*, p. 170; Wickens, *The Nasirean Ethics*, p. 124.

³⁷³ This is an Arabic quote from Ali Abu ibn Talib inserted in the Persian text:

"الحدة نوع من الجنون لان صاحبها يندم فان لم يندم فجنونه مستحكم."

See *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri*, p. 177; Wickens, *The Nasirean Ethics*, p. 129.

³⁷⁴ *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri*, p. 183; Wickens (trans.), p. 134.

³⁷⁵ *Akḥlaq-i Nasiri*, p. 197; Wickens (trans.), p. 145.

³⁷⁶ I thank Evan Grennon for directing me to this text and for his insights on this *akḥlaq* section of my chapter.

³⁷⁷ G. M. Wickens, “Akḥlāq-e Jalālī”, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. I, No. 7 (1984): 724; Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, pp. 143-7.

section on cures for psychological afflictions (*mu'alajat-i amraz-i nafsani*) that delineates the interdependence between physical medicine (*tibb-i jismani*) and spiritual medicine (*tibb-i ruhani*), and defers to the expertise of a physician in discerning how to medicate the patient using dietary, pharmacological or psychic remedies. It identifies three diseases of reason (*'aql*): perplexity, simple and compound ignorance, and anger. It is worth focusing on Dawani's explanation of the last two to comprehend his particular take on mental illness and madness.

The *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*'s prescription for treating simple ignorance (*jahl-i basit*) was to realize the inherent superiority of human knowledge and discernment (*'ilm-o-tamiz*) over that of animals, otherwise the ignorant person was to be counted among barbaric beasts (*haiwanat-i 'ajam*). Those afflicted by ignorance did not develop the powers of eloquent speech or self-expression, their words were akin to animalistic cries, and they were unable to distinguish between virtues and vices (*fazā'il-o-raza'il*). By contrast, compound ignorance (*jahl-i murakkab*) was defined as a condition where one continued to hold beliefs without the evidence to confirm them, further choosing to remain unaware of their ignorance. In this context, Dawani writes that "just as physicians of the body are unable to cure some chronic diseases and firmly rooted afflictions, so too are physicians of the mind unable to cure this disorder" (emphasis mine).³⁷⁸ The exact term used is "physicians of the soul" (*attiba-yi nufus*), indicating an understanding of compound ignorance as a spiritual but also psychological condition. While ignorance was never identified as a mental illness per se in Mughal medical treatises, Dawani's statement implies that medical experts in late-fifteenth century Iran could have potentially treated it as one, but chose not to, for it was considered beyond redemption.

Building on the *Akhlāq-i Nasirī*'s discussion of anger (*ghaḥb*) as a form of momentary madness, the *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* theorized that every reflection of an angry temperament generated intense bodily heat. If prolonged, this heat could turn into "ferocious insanity" (*junun-i sabi'iy*), as those acquainted with the laws of medicine were well aware. Further, lack of repentance (*pashimani*) after a furious outburst was a firm indicator of insanity. The incandescence of anger caused the bodily humors to burn, the soul's essence to combust, and the patient to have a near-death experience.³⁷⁹ In interpolating these remarks to Tusi's exposition on vices of the soul, Dawani hypothesized a close association between anger and madness that could lead one astray from the path of virtue. In this sense, insanity was the extreme manifestation of an unbalanced, unreasonable, violent disposition that was both medically and philosophically tied with the ill-effects of excessive anger.

The third text in this tradition was Kamaluddin Va'iz Kashifi's *Akhlāq-i Mohsini* ("Ethics of the Beneficent", 1502), a Timurid tract on ethics dedicated to Sultan Husayn Bayqara in Herat, although it was addressed primarily to his son, 'Abd al-Mohsin Mirza (hence the title can also be read as "Mohsin's Ethics"). Alternatively titled the *Jawābir al-Asrar* ("Jewels of Secrets"), it became popular in Mughal India and spurred multiple imitations in Persian and later Urdu. Although inspired by Tusi and Dawani's treatises, the *Akhlāq-i Mohsini*'s format diverged greatly from these earlier texts, being more anecdotal than didactic in its ethical prescriptions. Divided into forty chapters on ideal virtues, each section contains moralistic fables about encounters between sages, dervishes, kings, servants, and people of various classes.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Dawani, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, ed. Abdullah Mas'udi Arazi (Tehran: Intisharat-i Ptila'at, 1391 AH/ 1971 CE), p. 145. In Persian: "چنانچه طبای بدن از علاج بعضی امراض مرمنه و علل مستحکمه عاجز آیند، اطبای نفوس از علاج این مرز عاجزند." My translation differs slightly from SH Deen, *The English Translation of Akhlak-i Jalālī: A Code of Morality in Persian, composed by Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad alias Allama Dawwani* (Lahore: Mubarak Ali Publishers, 1939), p. 91.

³⁷⁹ Dawani, *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, p. 148; S.H. Deen, *The English Translation of Akhlak-i Jalālī*, p. 94.

³⁸⁰ G. M. Wickens, "Aḳlāq-e Mohsenī", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. I, No. 7 (1984): 724-725. See also Maria E. Subtelny, "A Late Medieval Persian Summa on Ethics: Kashifi's *Akhlāq-i Muḥṣini*," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2003): 601-614. The latter notes the existence of a lavishly illustrated manuscript copy of the text in Tashkent dating to 1544.

The twenty-fourth chapter of the *Akblaq-i Mobsini* on “commitment to responsibility” (*wafa ba ‘abd*) contains an anecdote about the responsibilities of a king (*‘abd-i padshah*) that sheds light on madmen and their capacity to offer advice. A king wanted to distribute all the money in his treasury to the needy and deserving. When he asked the treasurer to take stock of the imperial treasury, his ministers and nobles advised him to not give all his wealth to dervishes since the army would then be deprived of their livelihood. Meanwhile, the *‘ulama* in his court issued a fatwa asking the king to take his servants into account. As he sat on his balcony pondering his next move, he was caught unawares by a madman (*divana*) passing by. The king wanted to solicit the madman’s advice and called out to him: “O madman! Since I am conditionally and faithfully bound with God, it is incumbent upon me to give away all my money as alms in His path. Before I can execute this wish, my estate and finances are vast. My nobles do not want me to donate all of it while the *‘ulama* consider my soldiers deserving of their share. What do you think?” The madman responded, “O king! If I had this responsibility that you say, I would distribute alms to dervishes. Did it cross your mind to give them to soldiers?” The king said, “No, it was these paupers and indigents who crossed my mind.” As the madman encouraged him to give alms to beggars, a noble interjected: “O madman! The wealth is beyond your imagination and the soldiers are without sustenance.” The madman turned his head away from the noble and said to the king, “Have you passed on your responsibility to this noble, do you not have any other work? Be faithful to your responsibility and if you don’t need him, don’t listen to him. Follow your own instinct.” The king began to sob and eventually distributed all his wealth among the destitute and needy. This is followed by a *masnavi* that begins thus:

*Whoever you perceive to be a madman is rational,
Whoever is not rational is [indeed] insane.*³⁸¹

هر که را دیوانه خوانی، عاقل است،
هر که عاقل نیست دیوانه است.

In this story, Kashifi stressed the madman’s guidance of the king in his rightful duty, indicating the madman’s perceptive ability to steer the king to his original purpose of giving alms to the destitute. The idea of madness that emerges here departs somewhat from Tusi and Dawani’s conception. Instead of engendering a purely philosophical distinction between rationality and irrationality, mediated by virtues of the soul, by excessive emotions like anger and grief, or by a quasi-medical understanding of simple and compound ignorance, the *Akblaq-i Mobsini* suggests a part-political, part-ethical vision of the madperson as being capable of argumentative reasoning and sagacious wisdom. An outsider without any courtly or material stakes in the outcome of imperial charity or munificence, the madman was able to provide an external perspective that was perhaps reflective of his own role as a figure on the margins of rationally ordered society. Kashifi’s anecdote can also be read against the Timurid context of his writing where he was possibly urging his own patron, Husayn Bayqara in Herat, to not be led astray by his nobles and theologians in fulfilling his obligations.

A second instance of madness in the *Akblaq-i Mobsini* occurs in the thirty-ninth chapter on “warding off the wicked” (*dafa-yi ashrar*) during a conversation between Alexander and Aristotle. People who were garrulous and had troubled speech were not considered worthy of service (*khidmat*), since the words of those who talked a lot were not likely to have much value. In practicing excessive speech, they were likely to make more blunders and errors. Quoting Bozorgmehr, the famous twelfth-century Sasanian sage, Kashifi writes that when someone greedy was predisposed to be loquacious, they were “accursed by insanity” (*mat’annun shavad ba-junun*), such that one could say with certainty they were mad (*divana*). He cites a common Arabic idiom, *al-mikthar mahdhar*, meaning that excessive talking soon becomes akin to talking nonsense

³⁸¹ Kamaluddin Husain bin Va’iz Kashifi Sabzawari (ed. Sayyid Hasan Naqibi), *Akblaq-i Mobsini* (Qom: Astan-i Muqaddas Hazrat Fatima Ma’suma, 2020), pp. 160-161. Translation mine. I have been unable to find the English translation of *Akblaq-i Mobsini* by DN Mulla (1895), while a more updated translation by Maria Subtelny is forthcoming, tentatively titled “Advice for a Prodigal Prince: Kashifi’s *Akblaq-i Muhsini*”.

(*bihuda-guyi*). This is followed by a story where the apostles sought counsel from Christ about how to ascertain their place in heaven after death. Christ advised them to never talk and stay silent unless it was to speak of kindness and goodness.³⁸² He expounded that excessive talking “darkens the heart and perverts the brain”.³⁸³

I will assess the ripple-effects of these three *akhlaq* manuals in seventeenth-century Mughal India through a brief reading of theoretical Indo-Persian texts for their deliberations on irrationality and madness. Thus, Nur al-Din Qazi al-Khaqani’s *Akhlaq-i Jahangiri* (“Ethics of Jahangir”, 1622), written in Lahore under the aegis of the eponymous emperor, was based on a previous Mughal treatise, the *Akhlaq-i Hakimi* (“Ethics of Mirza Hakim”, c.1580), authored by al-Khaqani’s uncle in Kabul.³⁸⁴ Although purportedly drawing inspiration from the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, the *Akhlaq-i Jahangiri* hewed closer in its anecdotal style to the *Akhlaq-i Mohsini*. It highlighted the centrality of justice as a moral ideal for governance, narrating a tale from the reign of Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Khilji of Delhi when Shaikh Sharaf al-Din, a Sufi from Panipat, had an altercation with Dular, the governor (*hakim*) of the region. Dular, who happened to be a eunuch (*khmaja-sara*), first imprisoned a Hindu without just cause and then, after the Hindu sought refuge in the Sufi shaikh’s hospice, demanded his return and entered the hospice without the shaikh’s permission. As he rode in, he was suddenly thrown off his horse and killed.

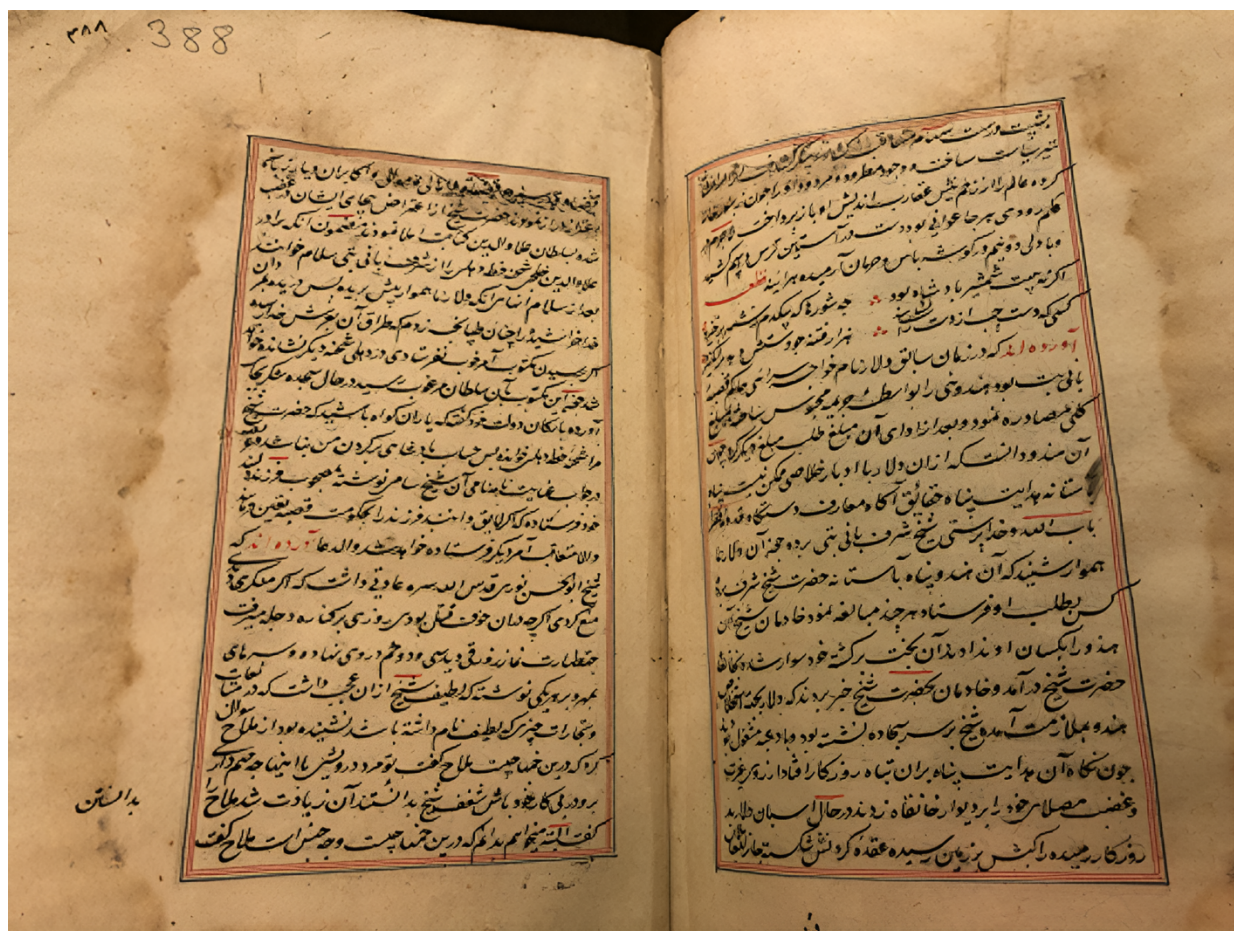


Figure 16. Story of Dular and Shaikh Sharaf al-Din in Al-Khaqani’s *Akhlaq-i Jahangiri*, ff. 387b-388a, 1622
I.O. Islamic 1547, © British Library, London

³⁸² Kashifi, *Akhlaq-i Mohsini*, p. 293.

³⁸³ “... *dil ra tira saʿad wa dimagh ra kbira*.” *Ibid*.

³⁸⁴ For more on the *Akhlaq-i Hakimi*, see Munis D. Faruqi, “The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2005): 487-523; and Sajida Alvi, *Advice on the Art of Governance: Mauʿizah-i Jahāngirī of Muḥammad Baqir Najm-i Sānī, An Indo-Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

The shaikh did not lift a finger but was possibly using his miraculous powers to channel his anger by slamming his prayer mat against the wall at the exact moment of Dular's death. Sharaf al-Din then wrote a letter to the Khilji Sultan explaining that Dular had "turned lunatic" and requesting a new governor for Panipat who would get along with the Sufi in the execution of his judicial duties.³⁸⁵

In the original manuscript of the *Akhlāq-i Jahangiri*, pictured above, there is no one word for "lunatic", as Alam's translation suggests. The whole phrase in Persian, *nahamwar barida pas darida*, literally means "cut an indecent figure and then [behaved] impudently". Presumably, the religious prejudice of the governor and his lack of courtesy when paying the Sufi saint a visit were the main reasons for his supposed impudence and lunacy. But a closer reading also reveals an ethical dimension to the story. Dular's excessively harsh penalization of the Hindu and his lack of repentance for his actions may have suggested a corrupted or diseased soul, in keeping with the *Akhlāq-i Nasiri*. This provoked the ire of Shaikh Sharaf al-Din, who manifested the death of this unfit governor. It is significant here that the fourteenth-century Sultanate context of the story, whether or not accurate, was used as a parable to reiterate the judicial obligations of a *qazī* in practicing prudent behavior with Sufis and emphasizing the ideals of justice and fairness towards non-Muslims for a seventeenth-century Mughal audience.

Another text that betrays shades of its philosophical inheritance in discussions of unreason and mental illness was Ruh al-Amin's *Falak al-Buruj* ("Sphere of the Constellations", 1637), a Deccani *masnavi* composed in Golconda and based on Nizami's *Haft Peykar* ("Seven Portraits", 1197) as well as Tusi's *Akhlāq-i Nasiri*. It gives the following advice:

*In a conversation be unmatched,
But do not be talkative like the sea.
Don't speak with the frivolous ones, no more, no less,
Speak gainfully my dear one, with every breath...
Don't give intellect from your own hand as a means of living,
Don't behave in the same manner in every place.*³⁸⁶

Without explicitly deploying the language of insanity, Ruh al-Amin was possibly building on the *Akhlāq-i Mohsinī*'s prescription to exercise verbal restraint lest associating with unscrupulous (*rindan*) people or garrulity foretell a lack of intellect (*ʿaql*). Further, Nizam al-Din Mahmud's *Itr-i Nauras Shabi* ("Perfume of the Nine Royal Essences", c.1620), commissioned by the Bijapuri Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II, noted in the context of adding saffron to wine that "sometimes extreme joy ends in madness".³⁸⁷ It emphasized the importance of maintaining balance, humoral as well as emotional, for a healthy body that required one to discipline one's alcohol intake and fragrance consumption so that their pleasures did not become immoderate or their senses overloaded. This was inspired by *akhlāqī* as well as *tibbī* concepts of mental illness, which circulated beyond Mughal domains and informed a Deccani treatise on the aesthetics of perfume-making.

Akhlāq notions of madness were also refracted through the seventeenth century in political contexts, where Mughal chronicles would call certain actors mad or insane based on

³⁸⁵ This anecdote from the *Akhlāq-i Jahangiri* is narrated in Alam, "Akhlāqī Norms and Mughal Governance", pp. 88-89.

³⁸⁶ Ruh al-Amin aka Mir Muhammad Shahrastani's *Falak al-Buruj* (Khuda Bhaksh Oriental Public Library, Patna, MS 302), ff. 71b-72b, cited in Emma Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 48.

³⁸⁷ *Itr-i Nauras Shabi*, f. 7b (British Library, Ethé 3076, MS I.O. Islamic 3650), cited in Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates*, p. 118. See also Ali Akbar Husain, "Ch 7: Perfuming the Heart: A Study of a Seventeenth-Century Perfumery Treatise from Islamic India", *Sound and Scent in the Garden* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 107-122.

their imperial disloyalty as well as their lack of ethical comportment. Their failure to meet certain idealistic standards of rationality set by Tusi, Dawani and Kashifi's writings catalyzed their rebellious behaviors and seemingly treasonous conduct. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I have argued that Abu al-Fazl in the *Akbar Nama* valorized the emperor Akbar as the fount of reason, and thus explained the political deviations of Shah Abu al-Ma'ali, Khwaja Mu'azza, Ghazzali, Murtaza Nizam Shah, and others as madness for not obeying Akbar's command or openly disregarding his authority as the Mughal sovereign. This discourse changed somewhat by the end of Jahangir's reign, as the question of rebellion alone did not warrant the charge of madness. By the 1620s, the Mughal Empire had become well-established, and the anxiety and unrest around needing to constantly justify Mughal political legitimacy by exalting the reason and perfect justice of the emperor had abated to an extent. Still, madness as a trope for irrationality and disloyalty remained alive, drawing on philosophical understandings of unreason and, increasingly during Shah Jahan's reign, a turn to legalistic notions of mental incapacity.

Shift in Political Madness: From Rebellion to Legal Incapacity, c.1620-1660

Mirza Nathan 'Ala' al-Din Isfahani's *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* ("The Spring-Land of the Disappeared One", 1624) records the noble Mirza Nathan's experience of the Mughal conquest of Bengal, Orissa, and Assam in the 1610s and 1620s.³⁸⁸ His father, Ihtimam Khan, was an Iranian immigrant who started his service under Akbar, was promoted under Jahangir, and sent as part of an imperial contingent to Bengal. Mirza Nathan describes the Mughal incursions into these hilly tracts that lay on the eastern fringes of the empire, and were ruled by Ahom, Afghan, Deccani, and other rulers. His depiction of these local kings as 'rebels', as well as the organization of his work into four sections (*daftar*s) according to the changing Mughal governorship of these regions, spotlight his loyalty to the Mughals.

The second *daftar* of the *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* reports that in 1617, Ahom rebels besieged the fort of Rangamati in Assam, and a Mughal contingent was sent under the command of Mir 'Abd al-Razzaq (later titled Muzaffar Khan) to reclaim it. But due to its inexperience and comparatively small size, this contingent was easily thwarted and defeated by the rebels. The Mir asked for reinforcements from the closest Mughal encampment in Bengal, which was under the command of 'Abd as-Salam and 'Abd al-Baqi. The latter called a meeting, where all Mughal officers from the encampment as well as the contingent gathered to discuss the appropriate course of action. At the meeting, Mirza Nathan suggested that the command of the forces be handed over to him. Due to his greater military expertise, he promised to be able to rout the rebels and recapture Rangamati fort for the Mughals. While 'Abd as-Salam supported this plan, 'Abd al-Baqi wanted the Mughal offensive to proceed as before under the Mir, and told the soldiers that whoever decided to leave the latter's command and go over to Mirza Nathan would be seen as showing disrespect to the Mughal crown. Everyone chose to remain with the Mir, much to Mirza Nathan's chagrin, who complained that no one seemed to care for the resultant loss of imperial privilege. 'Abd as-Salam tried to convince the Mir to join forces with Mirza Nathan, especially since the latter held a higher post, but to no avail.³⁸⁹

Here, it is significant how Mirza Nathan describes the Mir and his affiliates. He writes, "... the wind of madness was blowing over their heads, revealing their treacherous conduct". Although he reconciled with 'Abd al-Baqi and they eventually managed to recapture the

³⁸⁸ Only a single manuscript of the work was produced, and it remained unknown for a long time. Sir Jadunath Sarkar found it in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and gave it to MI Borah at Dacca University, who subsequently translated it in 1936. See MI Borah, "Introduction", *Baharistan-i Ghaybi: A History of the Mughal Wars in Assam, Cooch Behar, Bengal, Behar and Orissa during the Reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, Vols. I and II* (1624), translated by MI Borah (Guwahati: Government of Assam, 1936), xiii-xxix; and IH Siddiqui, "Bahārestān-e Ġaybī," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1988), pp. 481-482.

³⁸⁹ Mirza Nathan (trans. M.I. Borah), *Baharistan-i Ghaybi*, Vol. 1 (1936), pp. 304-306.

Rangamati fort, this temporary fallout and its description as madness reflects the close links between disagreement among officers, perceived disloyalty to the Mughal crown, and madness. Instead of presenting the Ahom rebels as “mad” for seizing a Mughal fort, it is Mir ‘Abd al-Razzaq and his supporters who are sketched as such for their refusal to agree with the Mirza’s plan of action. The lack of agreement, rather than an outright act of treason, is what the Mirza deems to be mad. A cursory reading would suggest that Mirza Nathan had a selfish, petty motive for accusing the Mir’s affiliates of mental instability; that he was miffed about not being given charge of the Mughal contingent. But I argue that his assessment of their psychological state was equally influenced by *akhlaqi* notions that connected the inability to do the right thing with a lack of courage, dereliction of proper military duty, and inability to foresee the expediency of his more experienced command (all of which in his eyes delayed the eventual reconquest of Rangamati fort).

Mirza Nathan begins the third *daftar* of the *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* with the departure of the previous governor of Bengal, Qasim Khan. Mirza Nathan served as the interim Mughal representative till the arrival of the new governor, Ibrahim Khan Fath-i Jang, and notes how he managed to consolidate the loyalty of the people of Bengal to the Mughal crown under his leadership. But this consolidation was by no means smooth, and was marked by dissension among his ranks. Shaikh Ibrahim, who had served as the revenue collector (*kakori*) of Kuch (modern-day Cooch-Bihar in north Bengal) for some time, was found guilty of embezzling money from the royal treasury and putting together his own army of more than three thousand men. According to Mirza Nathan, the “wind of madness led him astray”, as he sought military and financial support from the Ahom king in return for a promise to protect him from a Mughal attack, launching an attack on the Mughal fort of Dhamdhama.³⁹⁰ The emperor sent orders for the *kakori* to be captured alive and sent to Delhi. The bearer of this imperial order, Mir Ghiyas al-Din Bakshi, discussed the near-impossibility of capturing the rebel alive with Mirza Nathan. The latter replied that his contingent was aware that Shaikh Ibrahim *kakori*’s rebellion had arisen out of his “... vain ideas, and he [was] puffed with pride and madness.”³⁹¹ This is a more conventional depiction of the *kakori*’s seditious acts as being motivated by the “wind of madness”, and shows how insurgency continued to be read as madness. Moreover, it was precisely this representation of the *kakori* that explained his attempt to garner support from the Ahom king and attack a Mughal fort.³⁹² In this case, we can also make a direct connection between the *kakori*’s fiscal avarice and imperial disobedience with Tusi’s explanation for corruption of the soul, excessive greed, and moral turpitude.

Towards the end of Jahangir’s reign, then, direct challenges to Mughal sovereignty or failures to submit obediently to their imperial expansion continued to be termed insane or unreasonable, but not in the same expansive way as they had in the late-sixteenth century. Texts like the *Baharistan-i Ghaybi* were more judicious in deploying the label of madness as a pejorative for fringe groups like the Ahoms who resisted Mughal rule in Assam. Instead, Nathan’s ire was directed at his own officers who betrayed the Mughal cause and exposed their lack of ethical comportment or moral weakness that led them to give in to base desires. This inward-looking critique of imperial service couched in the vocabulary of insanity marked a shift from an earlier, outward-facing castigation of any oppositional local rulers who resisted Mughal rule as psychologically disturbed.

³⁹⁰ Mirza Nathan (trans. M I Borah), *Baharistan-i Ghaybi*, Vol. 2 (1936), pp. 442-444.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 456.

³⁹² On the Ahom-Mughal conflict, see Sajal Nag (ed.), *The Mughals and the North-East: Encounter and Assimilation in Medieval India* (London: Routledge, 2023) and Kaushik Roy, “Small Wars, Ecology, and Imperialism in Precolonial South Asia: A Case Study of Mughal-Ahom Conflict, 1615-1682,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2023): 9-31.

The case of the contumacious Afghan noble Khan Jahan Lodi (d. 1631) is instructive to understand the changing ideas of political madness. Lodi had established himself as a trustworthy, martially skilled noble who participated in the Mughal conquests of Thatta, Multan, Gujarat and the Deccan, thus proving his “courage and manliness”.³⁹³ Previously known as Pir Khan, he was appointed governor of the Deccan and faced off with the Ethiopian leader Malik Ambar, the de-facto ruler of the Ahmednagar Sultanate, in Burhanpur and Balaghat. It was said that Jahangir treated Lodi like a protégé rather than a servant, even wanting him to marry a princess from the Mughal harem, although this did not transpire.³⁹⁴ Lodi briefly served in the retinue of Prince Parvez, and after Khurram went into rebellion,³⁹⁵ was promoted to commander-in-chief of the Mughal army in 1626, leading the charge against the wayward prince. Thus, his meteoric rise to power and proven record of military prowess and imperial loyalty distinguished his career under Jahangir. Indeed, Nimatullah Haravi’s *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani* spoke in glorifying terms about his genealogy and his ability to lead an Afghan community (*qaum*).³⁹⁶ However, Jahangir’s death and the subsequent battle for succession to the Mughal throne spelt trouble for Khan Jahan Lodi and his Afghan followers.³⁹⁷

In a key moment in October 1627, news came of Jahangir’s death, and his grandson Dawar Bakhsh was temporarily declared emperor in Lahore with his uncle Shahryar (Khurram’s half-brother) challenging his bid for power. In this confusion, the chronicler Farid Bhakkari writes in his *Zakhirat al-Khawanin*: “Many nobles defected against the [Mughal] sovereign of that time and became *delusional*. They would inevitably be punished by retributive killing.”³⁹⁸ The Persian term for delusional, *mutavahhum*, is used to indicate the extent of mental imbalance among these insurgents. Even during a period of royal transition, when it was unclear which of the three contenders – Dawar Bakhsh, Shahryar or Khurram – would emerge victorious, any hint of disloyalty among the rank and file was immediately castigated as hallucinatory and phantasmic, a symptom of their madness, meriting punitive action according to the Islamic law of *qisas* or retributive killing. Lodi, underestimating Khurram, clearly believed the contest would be between Dawar Bakhsh and Shahryar.

As the dust settled, Dawar Bakhsh and Shahryar were defeated and put to death by Khurram. He assumed the title of Shah Jahan (“Ruler of the World”) at his coronation in Agra in February 1628 and ordered the execution of all former princely rivals. A terrified Lodi happened to be in Malwa at the time and decided to sit out the coronation, ignoring a royal edict (*farman*) summoning him to Agra. Some “short-sighted ones” (*kutab-andishan*) including the Afghan noble Darya Khan Rohilla advised Lodi to ransack the treasuries of Ahmedabad and Mandu, but he declined, knowing that he was already in Shah Jahan’s bad graces. Ultimately, Lodi did go to Agra and offer tribute, but it was too late to make amends; the damage was done. He was disrespected and humiliated at the Mughal court, stripped of his property, and became increasingly paranoid and insecure about his position. Despite the emperor’s reassurance that he had been

³⁹³ “*muruvvat wa mardangi*”, see Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhirat al-Khawanin (Persian Text)*, Vol. II (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1970), p. 70. On Bhakkari’s life and relationship to Khan Jahan Lodi, see Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi, “An Early Historian of the Mughal Nobility: Shaikh Farid Bhakkari,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1986): 317-326.

³⁹⁴ We even have access to a surviving chronicle titled the *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-i Afghani* (“History of Khan Jahan or Treasury of the Afghans”, c. 1615) on the history of the Afghans, whose author Khwaja Nimatullah Haravi was in Lodi’s employ and dedicated it to his benefactor. See S.M. Imamuddin (ed.), *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani wa Makhzan-i Afghani*, in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. V (Dhaka: 1962).

³⁹⁵ For a detailed discussion of Khurram’s rebellion in 1623-4, see Munis D. Faruqi, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 208-17.

³⁹⁶ On the Afghan legacy of Khan Jahan Lodi, see Nicole Ferreira, Chapter 4 in “Mobile Pasts: Memory, Migration, and Place in Afghan Identity, 1451-1770” (PhD dissertation, UC Berkeley, 2023), pp. 70-95.

³⁹⁷ Khan Jahan Lodi’s career and later fall from grace are also discussed in a later text, the *Ma’asir al-Umarā* (“Biographies of Notables”, 1780), based largely on Bhakkari’s account. Shahnawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, *Ma’athir-ul-Umarā*, trans. Henry Beveridge and Baini Prashad (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1979), pp. 795-804.

³⁹⁸ *Zakhirat al-Khawanin*, p. 81. Emphasis mine.

forgiven, Lodi anticipated a backlash. He absconded in October 1629, fleeing to the Nizam Shahi court in Daulatabad in the Deccan with the Mughal army in hot pursuit. This was the final nail in the coffin; there was no coming back from Lodi's overture to the Nizam Shahis, the ultimate rivals of the Mughals at this time. There was some expectation among his co-ethnicists that Khan Jahan would try and create an autonomous Afghan kingdom in the Deccan, but he let them down.³⁹⁹ This story of Lodi's falling out of imperial favor and flight to the Deccan serves as the foil against which Mughal chroniclers indicated his insanity over the next two years.

The *Padshahnama* by Abdul Hamid Lahori, a two-volume chronicle covering the first twenty years of Shah Jahan's reign, notes that

... Like empty flatterers lacking in wisdom, corrupt fancies and despicable thoughts darkened the ghoulish path of [Lodi's] frenzy. A demonic disturbance [that is characteristic] of depraved criminals caused his brain to fall into avarice and his heart to entertain vain hopes.⁴⁰⁰

Thus, without using the precise word for madness, Lahori insinuates Lodi's proclivity for it. He claims it became evident from the time Lodi refused to acknowledge the imperial order summoning him to attend Shah Jahan's coronation. This lapse of judgment was tantamount to a symbolic rebellion (much like Shah Abu al-Ma'ali had perpetrated when he first refused to come to Akbar's inaugural *darbar* – see chapter two). After Lodi found refuge with the Nizam Shah in Daulatabad, Shah Jahan set up camp in nearby Burhanpur. Believing that the Nizam Shah was no longer capable of protecting him, Khan Jahan aimed to travel to Punjab and gather support from Afghan leaders there. But while passing through Bundela territory in central India, his ally Darya Khan Rohilla was caught and decapitated by the local ruler, the son of another rebel, Jhujar Singh Bundela.⁴⁰¹ Cornered and helpless, Lodi and his Afghan army fought the Mughal forces in the town of Sihanda, where he was defeated by Madho Singh.

The painting below captures the moment of Lodi's beheading in February 1631, a warning to any future rebels to keep their refractory insanity in check and succumb to Shah Jahan's authority.⁴⁰² The inflicting of bodily harm in order to force corporeal obedience sent a strong message to his Afghan followers to fall in line and accept the sovereignty of the Mughal emperor.

³⁹⁹ *Zakhirat al-Khawanin*, p. 85; Faruqi, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, p. 247; Hannah Archambault, Introduction and Chapter 1 in "Geographies of Influence: Two Afghan Military Households in 17th and 18th Century South India" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2018), pp. 1-49.

⁴⁰⁰ Lahori, *Padshahnama, Jild-i Annal*, eds. Maulvi Kabir al-Din Ahmad and Abd al-Rahim (Calcutta: College Press, 1868), p. 270. In Persian:

"خوش آمد گویان بی خرد [با] خیال های فاسد و فکر های کاسد، که غول راه شوریدگان تیره روزگار است. و دیو طریق شولیدگان تبه کار در سر هوس پیما و دل هرزه گرا افتاد."

My translation differs from Wheeler Thackston's in Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *King of the World: The Padshahnama, an Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle* (New York: Thames and Hudson Co., 1997), pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰¹ The son of Bir Singh Deo, the ruler of Orchha who had helped Prince Salim orchestrate the murder of Akbar's beloved advisor and chronicler Abu al-Fazl in 1602, Jhujar Singh had a notorious reputation at the Mughal court since his enthronement. The Mughal prince Aurangzeb defeated him in battle and forced him to retreat to Chauragarh. The Bundela ruler was eventually killed by Gond in the Kingdom of Chanda a year later, on the run from Shah Jahan who had instructed Khan-i Dauran and Firoz Jung to execute him. I have not, however, encountered the label of madness for Jhujar Singh. See Abha Singh, "Jujhar Singh's Rebellion: A Reappraisal", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 51 (1990): 233-240.

⁴⁰² Hamid Afaq Siddiqi (trans.), *Lahori's Padshahnamah, 1592-1638, Vol. 1* (Delhi: Idarah-yi Adabiyat-i Dehli, 2010), pp. 66-70, 85-94. For a visual analysis of the painting of Lodi's decapitation, see Beach and Koch, *King of the World*, pp. 174-176.



Figure 17. "The Decapitation of Khan Jahan Lodi in February 1631"
 from *Padshahnama* (British Library), f. 94b, painted by Abid, c.1633
 © Royal Collection Trust, London

Another chronicle, the *Amal-i Salih* or *Shahjahanama* of Mirza Kamboh, completed thirty years later in 1660, terms Khan Jahan Lodi's flight from Agra to the Deccan his "hastening to

the valley of eternal adversity by way of ignorance and lack of wisdom”⁴⁰³. Lack of wisdom here was closely linked to a descent into unreason. Upon Shah Jahan’s coronation, claims the text, Khan Jahan developed a humoral imbalance in his brain. The wind of greed and the black bile-madness (*saudayi*) of usurping authority conjoined to cause his head to become impassioned. As his rebellion intensified in the Deccan, Lodi kicked up the dust of “tumult and disturbance” (*shorish-o-ashub*) in all directions. Delusion (*tawabhum*) took the place of his wisdom, betraying his scattered memory and disconsonant senses.⁴⁰⁴ This vitriolic language in an ex-post facto Mughal source captures the extent of Lodi’s transgression, defying imperial power and exposing his mental imbalance in the process. Even a distance of thirty years, by which time Shah Jahan’s reign had ended and his son Aurangzeb had assumed the title of ‘Alamgir (“World Conqueror”) to become the sixth emperor, did not prevent the author from explaining the Afghan noble’s betrayal in terms of his insanity, disturbed mind, addled senses, and delusional unreason. It was clear that he had slapped away the emperor’s hand of benevolence and forgiveness, choosing the path of insurrection and insubordination only to reveal his irrationality and madness.

What work did the label of madness do in instances like Khan Jahan Lodi, a faithful and high rank-holder (*mansabdar*) in the Mughal nobility who turned insurgent upon the coronation of a new emperor? Reading the various chronicles above against each other underscores the importance of loyalty especially in times of royal succession, when the empire seemed at its weakest and the new dispensation had to tackle dissidents. The rhetoric of the emperor’s forgiveness and mercy always came first to show a spirit of inclusivity and justice. It was only when they refused this conciliatory gesture and dug their heels in that these rebels were called mad. This transgression took them beyond the pale of imperially defined reason, from where political redemption, synonymous with a return to sanity, became near-impossible. Other than Lodi, this was also true with another important uprising in the early years of Shah Jahan’s rule: Jhujjar Singh Bundela, the leader of the Rajput kingdom in Orchha in central India who went rogue. After Mughal forces captured the fort of Orchha, Bundela was decapitated in similarly gruesome fashion as Lodi in January 1636.⁴⁰⁵ It is also significant that these court chronicles were carefully curated to reflect a statist ideology under Shah Jahan, who directly supervised these authors branding disloyal, troublesome nobles as irrational and insane.

A slightly different interpretation of madness as legal incapacity also began to emerge in Shah Jahan’s reign. This is evidenced in royal documents and letter exchanges that have survived from the period, for instance a squabble between two noble brothers, Asghar Beg and Qizilbash Khan, over the assignment of a revenue landholding (*jagir*) in Berar in the Deccan. A memorandum (*yaddash*) from May 1638 records how Qizilbash Khan petitioned the Mughal court to take away his brother’s *jagir* on account of his inability to discharge his administrative, revenue-collecting duties and effectively manage the territory. The accusation was that Asghar Beg was “grabbed by the disease of insanity” (*ba marx-i junun girafar gashta*), leaving him compromised and unable to act with rationality and foresight. Qizilbash Khan requested that the *jagir* be handed over to someone more capable, in this case another noble by the name of Mirza Khan, presumably his trustworthy friend. Although this request was carried out and his *jagir* was transferred, Asghar Beg retaliated and presented proof of his sanity to Sha’ista Khan, the Mughal governor of the Deccan, testifying that he was not afflicted by madness and entirely capable of governing his *jagir*. Eventually, with the mediation of Sha’ista Khan, the emperor restored his rank and revenue assignment.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ “*shitaftan ba-vadi-yi adbar-i sarmadi az ruyi nadani wa bi-kebiradi*”. See Mirza Salih Kamboh, *Amal-i Salih or Shahjahan-nama*, ed. Ghulam Yazdani (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1923), p. 344.

⁴⁰⁴ *Amal-i Salih*, pp. 344-350.

⁴⁰⁵ BP Saxena, *History of Shahjahan of Dilli* (Allahabad: The Indian Press Ltd, 1931), pp. 79-93; Beach and Koch, *King of the World*, pp. 88-92, 195-198.

⁴⁰⁶ Document No. 27 in Yusuf Husain Khan (ed.), *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan’s Reign* (Hyderabad: Daftar-i Diwani, 1950), pp. 67-68. I thank Munis Faruqui for drawing my attention to this document.

This document provides us remarkable insights into the evolving definition of insanity as legal incapacity that prevented Mughal *mansabdars* from performing their duties.⁴⁰⁷ The effort by one brother to remove another's *jagir* on account of his insanity (perhaps true, perhaps not) speaks to either jealousy or inter-sibling rivalry. There was an undertone of both sympathy and condescension to Qizilbash Khan's accusation that his brother was suffering from a psychological affliction. Shah Jahan clearly wanted his *jagirdars* to be in their rational senses, even low-ranking ones like Asghar Beg,⁴⁰⁸ therefore endorsing the transfer of his *jagir* to Mirza Khan, even though no doctor was summoned to ascertain or diagnose his precise mental condition. Asghar Beg's indignance and desire to win back his revenue landholding, combined with a possible fear that he might be seen as rebellious or untrustworthy, led him to appeal to Shaista Khan, the highest-ranking noble in the Deccan after Prince Aurangzeb. "Restoring" the *jagir* to Asghar Beg indicates that Shah Jahan contradicted his previous judgment. That the king and a very senior nobleman got personally involved in this matter highlights a certain wariness around lower-ranking nobles being accused of insanity.

The gradual coalescence of political and legal notions of madness is apparent in the example of the itinerant Sufi mystic Sarmad Kashani (d. 1661). Born an Armenian Jew, Sarmad was a merchant who migrated from Iran, fell in love with a young Hindu boy named Abhay Chand in Thatta (Sindh), roamed around naked, converted to Islam but also spoke about its deficiencies, and traveled through the Deccan, finally making his way to the Mughal court. Sarmad was a Persian translator of the Jewish Torah, and an illustrious poet whose collection of quatrains (*Rubaiyat*) is comparable in quality to Omar Khayyam's. He was declared an apostate after he supported the crown prince Dara Shukoh in the Mughal War of Succession (1657-59) that resulted in Aurangzeb's victory and Shah Jahan's imprisonment in Agra Fort. The French physician François Bernier, who happened to be in Dara Shukoh's employ, noted with disgust how Sarmad paraded the streets of Delhi without clothing and alienated Aurangzeb to the extent that he was eventually decapitated.⁴⁰⁹ Sarmad is popularly remembered as an unorthodox, free-spirited saint who incurred the wrath of the zealous, repressive Aurangzeb after refusing to cover his nakedness. Seen from this perspective, his unjust killing represented the extent of bigotry and autocracy in the new 'Alamgiri dispensation that did not allow for religious heterodoxy.⁴¹⁰

However, scholars have shown that his nudity, homosexuality, and heresy were not the primary reason for Sarmad's capital punishment. Based on eighteenth-century sources, the intellectual and politician Maulana Abul Kalam Azad writes that Sarmad's penchant for insanity became especially evident after he fell in love with Abhay Chand in Thatta and wandered naked through the desert sands of Sindh.⁴¹¹ His controversial reputation as a madman (*majnun*) known

⁴⁰⁷ On documentary exchanges among Mughal soldiers deployed in the Deccan, see Subah Dayal, "Making the 'Mughal' Soldier: Ethnicity, Identification, and Documentary Culture in Southern India, c. 1600-1700", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 62, No. 5-6 (2019): 856-924.

⁴⁰⁸ Asghar Beg reportedly held a low position (*mansab*) in the Mughal nobility, with a numerical rank (*ẓat*) of 100 and a cavalry rank (*savar*) of 40. See Document No. 27 in Yusuf Husain Khan (ed.), *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign* (1950), pp. 67-68.

⁴⁰⁹ François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, AD 1656-1668*, trans. Archibald Constable and Vincent Smith (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 317.

⁴¹⁰ Beyond Sarmad, the (un)popular reputation of Aurangzeb as the power-hungry monarch who decapitated his own brother to seize the throne and eventually crafted zealous Islamic policies to target Hindu rulers like the Marathas and Rajputs is a skewed, right-wing narrative that has taken on a life of its own in recent works. Some authors have gone so far as to level the charge of madness against Aurangzeb, unfavorably comparing him with the fourteenth-century Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq in his supposed bigotry and erratic governance, blaming him squarely for the decline of the Mughal Empire. An example of this is Farzana Moon, *The Moghul Saint of Insanity* (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). I strongly disagree with this lopsided, ahistorical characterization of 'Alamgir's reign as well as the misappropriation of insanity as a dismissive label to vilify his rule.

⁴¹¹ Writing in 1910, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad used Sher Khan Lodi's *Mirat al-Khayal* and Ali Quli Valeh Dagestani's *Riyaz al-Shu'ara* to reconstruct this account of Sarmad. Azad, "Sarmad Shaheed," in *The Rubaiyat of Sarmad*, trans. Syeda Saiyidain Hameed (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1991), pp. 13-43.

for his nudity, homoerotic dalliances, and blasphemous statements therefore preceded his arrival in Delhi. It was no surprise that Dara Shukoh, who was known for keeping the company of mendicants and philosophers, was intrigued by Sarmad's unconventional spiritual outlook and linguistic skills, and immediately recruited him to his coterie. As the War of Succession broke out, Sarmad loyally supported Dara and predicted that Dara would win. In the end, it was his obstinate refusal to accept Aurangzeb's accession in 1658 even after 'Alamgir tried to rehabilitate him and gave him opportunities to repent, that led to his death.



Figure 18. "The naked saint Shah Sarmad sitting with Prince Dara Shukoh, c. 1655"
©W912, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

A lot of ink has been spilt on Sarmad's apostasy trial in 1660-61 that was used as a legal justification by 'Alamgir to order his execution.⁴¹² When asked to complete the Islamic

⁴¹² See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Sarmad the Jew: A Precursor of the Encounter", *The Jewish Encounter with Hinduism: Interreligious Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 31-38; Paul Smith, *Sarmad: Life and Poems* (Createspace Independent Publishing, 2014); Rajeev Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā: The Cultural Memory of Dārā Shekūh and the Mughal Public Sphere," *Journal of Persianate Studies* (2009): 165-193; Nathan Katz, "The Identity of a Mystic: The Case of Sa'id Sarmad, A Jewish-Yogi-Sufi Courtier of the Mughals", *Numen*, Vol. 47 (2000): 142-160; Natalia Prigarina, "Sarmad: Life and Death of a Sufi," *Institute of Oriental Studies, Russia* (1998): 314-330; Zahurul Hassan Sharib, *Sarmad and His Rubaiyat* (Southampton, UK: Sharib Press, 1994); M.G. Gupta, *Sarmad*

oath (*shahada*), “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger”, Sarmad stopped at “There is no God [i.e. Allah]” and refused to complete the saying. His words therefore connoted atheism, earning him the nickname *Hallaj-i Sani* (“the second Hallaj”), reminiscent of the tenth-century Baghdadi Sufi Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) who was beheaded for saying *Ana al-Haq* (“I am the Truth”), interpreted as his claim to divinity. This confirmed Sarmad’s heresy (*kufr*) to the Islamic theologians present, and ‘Alamgir ordered his beheading. The legend goes that as his head was severed from his body, it rolled down the steps of the Friday Mosque and left behind a trail of blood. Sarmad’s bloody execution is symbolized by the red walls of his grave in Delhi, located adjacent to the Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad. It is revered as the Sufi shrine of Sarmad “Shaheed” (martyr) by pilgrims today and inscribed with the following Urdu quatrain:

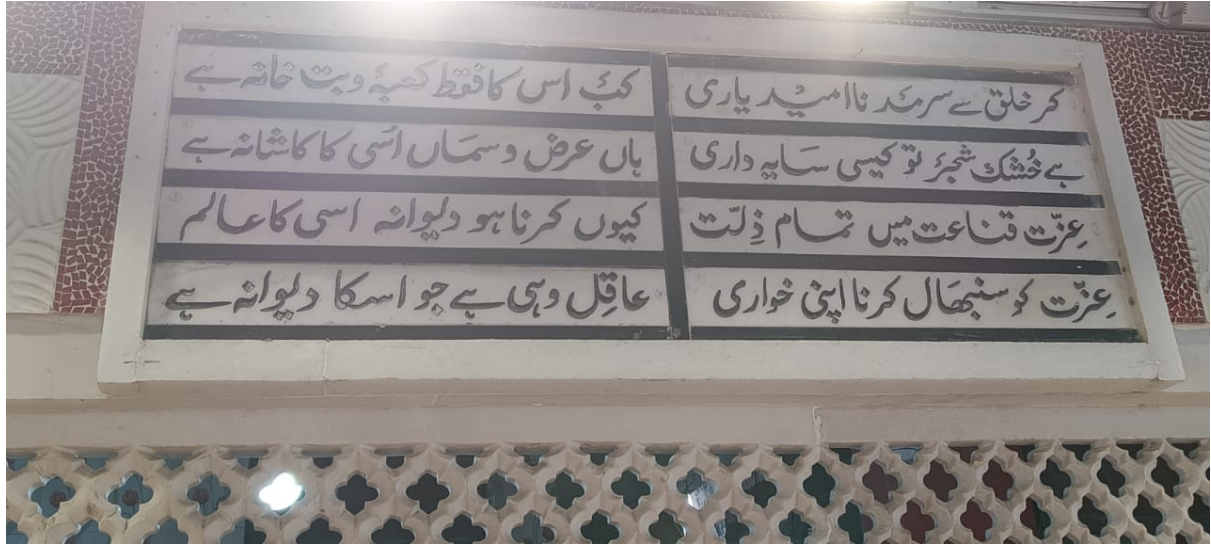


Figure 19. Urdu inscription above Sarmad’s grave near Jama Masjid, Delhi
© Pia Maria Malik, 2022

*If Sarmad is hopeless about friendship in this world,
This is merely his Muslim shrine and Hindu temple.
If his genealogy is dry, whose shadow of benefaction is this?
Yes, this lodging is for his corporeal belongings.*

*[If] suffering humiliation earns respect and contentment,
Why shouldn’t the world then become mad for him?
Maintaining that respect is one’s own contempt,
The true wise one is she who goes insane for him. (translation mine)*

A deeper study of Sarmad’s sacrilege, political rebellion, apostasy trial, and execution therefore reveals a changing legal understanding of insanity in the transition from Shah Jahan to Aurangzeb’s reigns. Both the 1638 memorandum (*yaddasht*) discussing Asghar Beg’s supposed insanity and the 1661 apostasy trial of the mad saint Sarmad attest to a gradual shift in the Mughal discourse of understanding political rebellion as an act of madness to a legal classification that cemented the precise ways in which a person’s mental imbalance was assessed and penalized. In the next section, I turn to a Mughal jurisprudential manual under ‘Alamgir that, though ostensibly aggregating medieval Islamic laws, was shaped by its contemporary milieu.

the Saint: Life and Works (Agra: MG Publishers, 1991); and Isaac Ezekiel, *Sarmad: Jewish Saint of India* (Punjab: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1966).

Insanity under Aurangzeb ‘Alamgir: Reading the *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri* (c. 1675)

The category of madness in Mughal law became more sharply defined through its most renowned and comprehensive text, the *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri* (c. 1675). This was a compendium of Hanafi law commissioned by ‘Alamgir to collate centuries of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), primarily in the Arabic-speaking world. It is especially illuminating to study madness in the Hanafi school of law, given that it was based on rationality and interpretive reasoning.⁴¹³ But the *Fatawa* was not simply recycling medieval Islamic modes of thought. When read through the prism of insanity, the text reflects changing legal mores in late-seventeenth-century India, which needs to be situated within a larger Islamicate context. The text is originally written in Arabic, and although it was translated into Persian at the Mughal court, it has not survived.⁴¹⁴

When looking at the longer Islamic legal tradition predating the *Fatawa*, it becomes apparent that madness was at once something specific and nebulous, intuitive and ineffable. The mad person (*majnun* in Arabic, *divana* in Persian, *pagal* in Urdu) in the *Fatawa* was not simply one who suffered from mental illness. Madness was a state of mind that was antithetical to everything that was rational, reasonable or balanced. It rendered the person incapable of doing certain things, of fulfilling ritual and contractual obligations. But by the same token, the insane were not held responsible for their actions in certain contexts.

The legal treatment of madness went back to Greco-Roman law (5th century BCE – 3rd century CE), which aimed at protecting society from the insane. The family members of madpersons (*furiosi*) were expected, under penalty of fines, to take care of their kin and make sure that they were kept off the streets. Physicians were often summoned to weigh in on who qualified as being “of sound mind”. If insanity was determined, and there was no paternal head of the family, a guardian or *curator* was appointed to take care of the estate of the mad, with the goal of retaining property within the family. The insane had no legal rights in executing contracts of any nature, including wills, marriage, and divorce, except if they were temporarily mentally ill, in which case they could execute contracts in periods of lucidity or sanity. In keeping with this principle, insanity was also considered an impediment in validating a marriage contract, and could lead to dissolution of marriage. The earliest iteration of the insanity defense also dates to the third century, where a madman was seen as incapable of having rational intent, and therefore exempt from facing legal consequences if he committed homicide.⁴¹⁵

Michael Dols’s magisterial study of madness in the medieval Islamicate world is incredibly useful in understanding the longer legal tradition that predated how Mughal law under ‘Alamgir dealt with the category of insanity. All four *madhabs* or schools of Sunni Islamic law – Shafi’i, Hanbali, Maliki and Hanafi – were based on Qur’anic interpretation⁴¹⁶, but none of the verses in the Qur’an explicitly discuss insanity. Thus, there was no clear legal definition of insanity. In this scenario, Dols points out that discussion of insanity in these schools unfolded primarily through interdiction (*hajr*). Like children and those on their deathbed, the insane were deemed to have no legal capacity. Therefore, they could not exercise rights over children,

⁴¹³ See, for instance, Brannon M. Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Hanafi Scholarship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

⁴¹⁴ Alan Guenther, “Hanafi *Fiqh* in Mughal India: The *Fatawa-i ‘Alamgiri*,” in *India’s Islamic Traditions, 711-1750*, ed. Richard Eaton (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 209-230. On the compilation of the *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri*, see Samira Sheikh, “Aurangzeb as seen from Gujarat: Shi’i and Millenarian Challenges to Mughal Sovereignty,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2018): 557-581; AS Bazmee Ansari, “al-Fatāwā al-‘Ālamgīriyya,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition* (2012); Zafarul Islam, “Origin and Development of *Fatāwā* Compilation in Medieval India,” *Studies in History*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1996): 223-241; and Mujibullah Nadwi, *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri ke mu’allifin* (Lahore: Markaz-i Tahqiq, Dyal Singh College Trust Library, 1988).

⁴¹⁵ See, among others, Daniel N Robinson, *Wild beasts and idle humours: the insanity defense from antiquity to the present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Michael Dols also discusses this Greco-Roman tradition in the first part of his chapter on insanity in Islamic law: Dols, *Majnun: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 425-434.

⁴¹⁶ The four ‘roots’ or principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*‘usul al-fiqh*) were the Quran, Hadith, legal consensus (*ijma*) and deductive reasoning (*qiyas*).

property, or other familial and material concerns. Their criminal culpability was also limited since, as in Greco-Roman law, rational intent or will were seen as central to meting out punishment for crime. Following this, Al-Kasani's *Bada'i al-sana'i fi tartib al-shara'i* (twelfth century) stated that the interdiction of the insane only lasted till they regained their lucidity (*ifaqa*). Often, people would feign insanity to escape their civic or legal responsibilities, for instance when they were asked to be judges, or when they wanted to escape criminal indictment. Thirteenth-century jurists from the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools emphasized the need to be *rashid*, mature or of right judgment, in testing the legal capacity of a person, and in deciding whether or not they should be interdicted. The Maliki school, on the other hand, required judicial intervention to determine whether a person was insane or not.⁴¹⁷

Since the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri* is a Hanafi text, it is worth concentrating more on discussions of insanity in the Hanafi School on which it built. Founded by Abu Hanifa in the eighth century, this school was known for its focus on reason, especially on interpretive reasoning. One of the first legal commentaries in this tradition was al-Sarakhsi al-Hanafi's *Kitab al-Mabsut fi furu' al-fiqh* ("An Extensive Book on the Branches of Jurisprudence", eleventh century), according to which the *majnun*, or madman, was lacking in reason (*'adim al-'aql*), and the *ma'tub*, or idiot, was deficient in reason (*naqis al-'aql*). Both were similar to children and slaves in that they did not have full legal capacity. But in some later Hanafi works, we find a distinction made between idiocy (*'ataba*) and madness (*junun*). An idiot (*ma'tub*) was one who held semi-legal capacity, confused in his expression, and less violent than a madman (*majnun*), who was fully violent and legally incapable. Categories similar to that of the *ma'tub* included the foolish or prodigal (*safih*), and the imbecile or simpleton (*dhū al-ghafla*), all of whom had limited legal rights.

Michael Dols claims that in legal terms, madness was "a catch-all expression for various forms of unusual behavior" (452). I differ with him here; while I agree that there was something ineffable and abstract about madness, it was by no means a catch-all phrase. There is a fundamental contradiction in his formulation of insanity in medieval Islamic law as being an umbrella term that gave legal sanction to everything that might have been considered deviant or aberrant in a given society. Boaz Shoshan has offered a strong critique of Dols's conceptualization of madness.⁴¹⁸ But I want to go a step further. As I will show through my reading of the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, madness was not a casual referent for all behaviors and actions that were perceived as abnormal or non-normative; it had very specific connotations and was therefore very sparingly used in legal terms.

In matters of religious obligations (*'ibadat*), marriage (*nikah*), guardianship (*walayat*) and divorce (*talaq*), and murder (*qatl*), the insane were considered legally incompetent under Hanafi law. Firstly, they were exempt from the five daily prayers, as well as from other rituals like payment of *zakat* or the alms-tax. They were seen as incapable of obtaining ritual purity (*tabara*). Secondly, on the issues of marriage and divorce, only the guardian could arrange for their insane ward's marriage, since under Hanafi law, any marriage contract executed by an interdicted person (including a madperson) was rendered void. And thirdly, the insane were immune for the most part from prosecution if they committed homicide, but the insanity defense was not foolproof. Since the family of the victim needed to be recompensed, the insane's guardian was made to monetarily compensate the victim's family. But Hanafi law also offered the possibility of the insane inheriting from their victims in case they turned out to be related.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁷ Dols, *Majnun* (1992), pp. 434-440.

⁴¹⁸ On the issue of legal insanity, Shoshan's criticism is valid, that the lack of medical (doctors') interest in determining whether someone was legally to be deemed mentally ill or not was not limited to the Islamicate context, as Dols claims; it was rare for doctors to be involved in a legal determination of insanity in the medieval English, German, and other contexts as well. See Shoshan, "The State and Madness in Medieval Islam," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May 2003): 332-333.

⁴¹⁹ For this discussion of madness in Hanafi *fiqh*, and in the other *madhabs* of Islamic law, see Dols, *Majnun*, pp. 434-455.

In the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, insanity was an important legal concern in precisely these issues – religious obligations, marriage, guardianship and divorce, and murder. The first volume of the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, entitled the *Kitab al-Tiharat (Book of Purity)*, contains a section about the practices that nullified the Islamic ablution of *wazu*, or the ritual washing of the face, hands, arms and legs to ensure personal hygiene, especially before going to perform *namaḥ*. Among various factors that nullified *wazu* were unconsciousness (*behoshi*), madness (*junun*), swooning (*ghashi*), and intoxication (*nasha*).

No matter whether a person is unconscious for a short or a long time, their *wazu* is broken. The swooning born out of madness and intoxication also leads to the invalidation of *wazu*, provided the intoxication is so strong that it cannot uphold decency among men and women. This is the *Mukhtar-i Quwwal* of Sadr al-Shahid. Shams al-A'imma has also considered this to be correct⁴²⁰

By comparing madness with unconsciousness and intoxication, the Mughal jurists here imply that it was a passing phase, something that temporarily altered one's state of mind. This could lead to a breakdown of social protocol, where the codes for conduct between men and women were transgressed. Madness was closely associated in meaning with unconsciousness, intoxication and swooning, all of which necessitated repeating *wazu*.

This description is part of a longer section that discusses the different kinds of bodily discharge – excreta, semen, blood (especially menstrual blood), phlegm, vomit, pus, oil, even sweat – that could nullify the purity of *wazu*. The concern with bodily substances defiling the sanctity of *wazu* appears supreme. Megan Reid has argued that in Mamluk Egypt (11th-14th centuries), some people had excessive anxiety about ritual purity (*waswasa fi al-tahara*). Their need to perform *wazu* over and over again stemmed from the fear that the devil (Shaitan or Iblis) was whispering in the ears of unclean Muslims. Sometimes, the devil would take possession of these men's thoughts, and madness (*junun*) would take hold of them.⁴²¹ In this sense, madness could arise from an obsessive cleanliness. But on the other end of the spectrum, madness could also be the cause for breaking *wazu*, and thus considered unclean. This is an inherently self-contradictory notion: madness as both excessive purity and lack of purity. Although the first of these interpretations is not explicit in the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, it would not be a stretch to surmise that fear of and possession by the devil were intimately linked with ritual impurity and uncleanness in Mughal India as well.

The second volume of the text is the *Kitab al-Sulua (Book of Prayers)*, which begins with a description of *aḥaan* (call to prayer). According to this, the muezzin who sounded the *aḥaan* five times a day had to be mature (*baligh*) and rational (*'aqil*). If the person was “mad” (*pagal* in Urdu; *majnun* in Arabic), his *aḥaan* would be rendered invalid, and it would have to be sounded again. If someone in an intoxicated state (*ba-halat-i nasha*) read the *aḥaan*, then this was not approved of, and reading it again was desirable.⁴²² The rationality and maturity of the muezzin were important in earlier Islamic legal texts as well. This reveals a slightly varied iteration of insanity, linked to a sound mind. Although intoxication dulled the senses, it was a temporary condition that eventually wore off and therefore different from madness, which suggested an altered state of mind that was not permissible in someone whose duty was as holy as that of a muezzin's.

Madness is also discussed in the context of reading the *namaḥ*, where an imam leads the prayers, and the congregation follows his lead. The *Fatawa* states that someone who was permanently mad (*dayami majnun*) could not be allowed to observe *namaḥ*. But if the madness

⁴²⁰ Maulana Anzar Shah, *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri, Mukammal Mudallul-i Urdu*, Vol. 1 (Deoband, UP: Wasim Book Depot, 1968), p. 32.

⁴²¹ See Reid, Chapter 4, “The Devil at the Fountain: Problems of Ritual,” in *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 144-196; esp. pp. 164-165.

⁴²² *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri, Mukammal Mudallul-i Urdu*, Vol. 2 (Deoband), pp. 9-10.

(*junun*) was not permanent, and the person was sometimes overcome by madness and eventually recovered lucidity (*ifaqa*), then in the time between their madness and lucidity, their *namaḥ* would be accepted.⁴²³ This law reveals how the legal incapacity of the insane was not absolute, since they had the right to perform *namaḥ* in moments of lucidity. The difference between permanently mad and temporarily mad is an important one and allows us to formulate a layered legal understanding of differing degrees of madness.

Further, if the person fell unconscious (*beboḥ*), or became “mad” (*pagal* or *majnun*) or started laughing (*keḥkaha*) in the middle of reading *namaḥ*, then they would need to repeat *waḥu* and read *namaḥ* again. If they intentionally laughed loudly, snacked or caused any other disruption to reading the *namaḥ*, their prayer would not be accepted and be considered unclean (*na-pak*).⁴²⁴ Building on previous notions of madness in *waḥu* and *aḥḥan*, here too, madness was considered ritually impure. Further, bursting out laughing in the middle of *namaḥ* was not only extremely disrespectful and out of order, but also a sign of madness. While uncontrolled laughter was not madness in itself, the two were closely allied.

The fifth volume of the *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri* is the *Kitab al-Hajj*, and it offers insights into how madness was understood in the context of hajj, or the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca. In a section titled “the conditions for necessitating hajj”, one of the conditions was that the person had to be rational (*sahib-i ‘aql*). Someone who was a “mad person” (*diwana shakhs* or *majnun*) did not meet this condition, therefore being ineligible to perform hajj. The insane could not be trusted to make an arduous holy pilgrimage like the hajj and were therefore forbidden from undertaking it. But if the mad person regained lucidity (*ifaqa*) before the Day of Arafat (the second day of hajj), then (s)he was eligible to fulfill the obligation of hajj. This is consonant with the rule for *namaḥ*, where the temporarily mad were allowed to pray once they became lucid again.⁴²⁵ For instance, Shah Sa’id Palangposh (d.1699) was an Aurangabadi Sufi saint who lived through much of Aurangzeb’s reign. Before coming to India, he lived in Bukhara, where as a child, he became infatuated with *Qalandars* passing through his town. He followed them, became initiated, and from ages 7 to 18, wandered naked in the deserts, sometimes going to a bazaar in nearby Qarshi, where people knew him as “mad Sa’id”. However, after eleven years, he became “awakened” (meaning that he regained sanity or lucidity) in the bazaar with the guidance of his Sufi *pir*, Baba Qul Mazid, and accompanied the latter on hajj to Mecca and Medina.⁴²⁶

We may now turn to laws governing insanity in marriage, guardianship and divorce. The sixth volume of the *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri* is the *Kitab al-Nikah* (*Book of Marriage*). It lists the conditions necessary for marriage: both parties had to be rational (*‘aql*), mature (*baligh*) and free (*aḥḥad*). Thus, if a mad person (*majnun*) entered a contract of marriage (*‘aqd-i nikah*), this contract would not be considered correct and enforceable. Two witnesses (*gawab* or *shahid*) also had to testify to the marriage contract in order for it to be valid. These witnesses had to be free, sensible, mature Muslims. If witnesses to the marriage between a Muslim man and a Muslim woman were non-Muslim (*kafir*), mad or immature, the contract would not be ratified.⁴²⁷ Being mad nullified a marriage contract even in Hanafi *fiqh* of the 11th-14th centuries and was linked to immaturity and irrationality. But the difference in the Mughal context was that witnesses who were mad could not even testify to the validity of a marriage.

Since the mad were so unreliable, having a guardian (*sarparast* or *wali*) was very important. According to the *Fatawa*, if a madwoman (*pagal aurat*) had a son and a father, Abu Hanifa and

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p. 56. The sources cited for these rulings are *Fatawa-yi Qazi Khan* and *Fatawa-yi Tatar Khani*.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

⁴²⁵ *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri, Mukammal Mudallul-i Urdu*, Vol. 5 (Deoband), p. 6.

⁴²⁶ This story was narrated by Azad Bilgrami in *Ma’asir al-Kiram*. Cited in Simon Digby, “Before the Bābās Came to India: A Reconstruction of the Earlier Lives of Bābā Sa’id Palangpōsh and Bābā Muḥammad Musāfir in ‘Wilāyat,’” *Iran*, Vol. 36 (1998): 140-141.

⁴²⁷ *Fatawa-yi ‘Alamgiri, Mukammal Mudallul-i Urdu*, Vol. 6 (Deoband), pp. 5-6. The source cited for this ruling is the *Al-Babr ar-Raiq*. If the marriage is between a Muslim man and a non-Muslim (*zimmi*) woman, or between two non-Muslims, then the witnesses can be non-Muslims and the marriage would still be valid.

Abu Yusuf commanded that the son should be her guardian, but Imam Muhammad commanded that her father should be her guardian. In these circumstances, it was better if the madwoman's father asked his grandson to get his mother married, so as to resolve the juristic disagreement (*ikhtalaf*). This was presumably because after marriage, the madwoman's legal guardian would become her husband. In addition, if the guardian was responsible for an immature girl or boy, they had the right to marry off their ward "without [her/his] consent" (*bala razamandi*). This also applied in the case of a girl or boy who was mature but insane.⁴²⁸ The lack of consent of the insane signals an important exception to the rules of marriage. While any two rational people getting married had to verbalize their consent, in the case of the insane, their guardians decided their marriage partners for them. They themselves had no say in the matter since their unbalanced mind rendered them incapable of having awareness of their choices. There was also a gendered assumption that a madwoman in particular needed to have a male guardian, a concern that fed into a larger patriarchal framework that closely regulated the position of married women. As Shireen Moosvi has shown, marriage and divorce contracts among the middle class were especially stringent when it came to the status of married women in Mughal Gujarat.⁴²⁹

But what happened if the guardian himself (and rarely, herself) went mad? The insanity of legal guardians was an example of the fallacy of circular reasoning. When the guardians went mad, their guardianship was terminated. Following this premise, two possible conditions arose: one, since the guardian was now himself/herself insane, (s)he would need a guardian of their own; and two, with the loss of a guardian, the original insane ward would need a new guardian. The *Fatawa*, however, did not address these two legal loopholes. This illustrates the self-contradictory nature of madness, and the real tension in dealing with insanity beneath the thin veneer of legal clarity. Instead, the *Fatawa* notes:

If the guardian goes mad, and if the effect of madness remains all the time, the command is for their guardianship to be terminated. But if at any point of time they regain lucidity, their right to guardianship won't be terminated. The moment lucidity returns to them, all their previous work as a guardian will be deemed correct and enforceable. We get this account from Imam Abu Hanifa that if the guardian remains mad for a whole month, and at no point during this time does (s)he experience lucidity, then such madness is called "absolute insanity" – that madness which never ends – and this kind of guardian will no longer have a right to guardianship.⁴³⁰

In this context, again, madness did not imply complete legal incapacity; if it was temporary, and lucidity returned at some point, their legal rights would be restored to them. So, too, would their guardianship rights be suspended only for the duration of their madness. But if madness persisted for more than a month, with no sign of recovery, the category of "absolute insanity" (*junun-i mutabbig*) was invoked, whereby the guardian would lose their legal standing forever.

The seventh volume of the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri* is the *Kitab al-Talaq* (*Book of Divorce*). In a section about the circumstances when divorce became valid and when it didn't, the *Fatawa* did not consider the divorce of a mad person (*pagal shakhs*), a sleeping man, a patient of encephalitis (*sarsam ke mariz*), or someone who was unconscious (*bebosh*) or intoxicated (*madbosh*), to be valid. Further, the divorce of someone whose reason (*'aql*) was lethargic (*fitur*) also had to be disregarded, but the divorce had to be issued in this state of "lethargy and disorder" (*fitur-o-kehalah*); issuing divorce in a state of lucidity (*ifaqa*) would authorize the divorce.⁴³¹ Madness and its allied forms indicated a dulling of the senses, but they were not forever numb; their decision mattered in

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴²⁹ Moosvi, "Travails of a Mercantile Community - Aspects of Social Life at the Port of Surat (Earlier Half of the 17th Century)", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 52 (1991): 400-409.

⁴³⁰ *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, Vol. 6, p. 39.

⁴³¹ *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, *Mukammal Mudallul-i Urdu*, Vol. 7 (Deoband), p. 74.

moments of lucidity. So if the mad person issued a divorce, it was not immediately invalidated; their lack of awareness was crucial in nullifying it. A mad person who was lucid could therefore legally divorce.

Among the gradations of madness mentioned here, encephalitis (*sarsam*) was a medical condition that had to probably be first diagnosed by a doctor. The *Fatava* posits a scenario where a man who was “afflicted with the illness of encephalitis” (*sarsam ki bimari mein muftala*) issued a divorce, then regained his sanity and said he doubted if he had already divorced his wife. If he could recount what happened earlier, his divorce would stand; otherwise, it would be voided.

This description gives us a medico-legal understanding of encephalitis (*sarsam*) that is usually rare in Islamic law. There was a fine line between non-medicalized or psychological insanity, which was more common in the *Fatava*, versus a medicalized notion of debilitating ailments like encephalitis mentioned above. Unani medical texts such as Shaikh Ahmad Qannauji’s *Tuhfat al-Atibba* (“Rarity of Physicians”, 1680), produced during ‘Alamgir’s reign five years after the *Fatava*, diagnosed encephalitis as a mental illness with specific causes, symptoms, and treatments. The *Tuhfat al-Atibba*, a versified commentary on Ibn Sina’s *al-Qanun* with significant modifications to the latter, begins its tenth chapter on encephalitis thus:

[It occurs] in one of the two internal membranes,
The rigid membrane or the soft membrane.
Either the essence of the brain gets swollen,
Or an assembly of [brain nerves] is entangled.
This inflammation is known as qaranitis,
With illumination it is called oblivion.
Since excessive blood causes this encephalitis,
I will now pronounce its symptoms.
The breath is agitated without discipline,
The head is unsuccessful in hiding its pain...
Sometimes they have nothing on their clothing,
Yet they intend to pluck something off it.
The tongue reddens with their attempts to learn,
They oscillate between laughing and screaming.
Once [the illness] dissipates in a phase of ebbing,
Reduce the blood flow from the cephalic vein.
O lord, in a state of desiring strength,
After lancing [the arm], find its root cause.
If the breath and pulse are stabilized,
The heart’s condition is also in balance.
If the convenience of bloodletting exists,
Then perform cupping to cure [the illness].⁴³²

در یکی از دو پرده باطن،
پرده صلب و پرده لشن.
یا که نفس دماغ کرد ورم،
یا مجموع شان بود با هم.
گرم آن را بدان قرانیطس،
با روشنی را بنام لیثرغس.
که ز خون گشت حادث این سرسام،
بعلامات او کنم اعلام.
نفس مضطرب بغیر نظام،
سر می حشیم درد بود ناکام...
گاه چیزی بجامه ندارد،
بعد از آن قصد چیدنش آرد.
حمرت آید ز زبان زند سواد،
گه کند خنده و گهی فریاد.
پس از آن کاهد پس بفصل زوال،
خون بسیار کم کن از قیفال.
حال قوت طلب کنی ای مخدوم،
پس ز عضو ریشه کن معلوم.
نفس و نبض اگر بحال بود،
حالت دل بر اعتدال بود.
ما نعی فصد گر بود موجود،
که حجامت کنند دارو شود.

The *Tuhfat al-Atibba* then goes on to delineate the symptoms and treatments for eight types of encephalitis: hematic encephalitis (*sarsam-i damavi*), yellow-bile encephalitis (*sarsam-i sijravi*), black-bile encephalitis (*sarsam-i saudavi*), phlegmatic encephalitis (*sarsam-i balghami*), a mix of yellow-bile and phlegmatic encephalitis, diaphragmatic encephalitis (*barsam*), gangrenous encephalitis (*shiqaqalus*), and blood-swelling encephalitis (*filghamuni*).⁴³³ When compared with previous

⁴³² Qannauji, *Tuhfat al-Atibba*, Acc. No. 1628, Kitab No. 31, Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute, Hyderabad, f. 145b.

⁴³³ *Tuhfat al-Atibba*, ff. 145b-149a.

accounts of encephalitis, such as in the Deccani treatise *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shāhi* (1547),⁴³⁴ this poetic description of its onset, manifestations, eight-fold classification, and treatments suggests the advances in medical acumen about mental illnesses by the late-seventeenth century. Influenced by a deeper knowledge of the Unani and Ayurvedic traditions as well as greater medical experience and subsequent expertise in dealing with encephalitic patients, such accounts were also possibly shaped by jurisprudential understandings of mental illnesses as in the *Fatāwa-yi ‘Alamgiri*.

So far, my focus in discussing insanity in religious obligations, and in marriage, guardianship, and divorce laws, has been on reading the theoretical prescriptions of the *Fatāwa*, with little exploration of other Mughal sources that discuss the practical implementation of these laws. But in turning to the insanity defense and the mental state of the murderer, I will refer to other contemporary sources and look at specific cases in Aurangzeb’s period. I have done so for two reasons. One, we have much more case evidence in the sources for punishment of murder, and the role of madness therein. And two, despite an explication of the insanity defense in the *Fatāwa*, how to punish a murderer depended much more on the specific circumstances of a given case than on any blanket law.

One of the sections in the ninth volume of the *Fatāwa-yi ‘Alamgiri* is the *Kitāb-al Janāyat* (“Book of Crimes”). It describes murder (*qatl*) as a “crime of the breath” (*janāyat-i nafs*). Murder was a crime perpetrated by one person against another. This meant that the murderer was directly responsible to the family of the victim, and the state only stepped in if requested by the latter. Punishment happened through retributive killing (*qisas*), where the family members of the victim retributively killed the murderer. *Qisas* was not allowed when the emperor issued a royal pardon, or if the two parties made peace with each other.⁴³⁵ The *Fatāwa* states that if an idiot (*ma’tul*) or a madman (*majnūn*) killed someone in a “state of madness” (*halat-i junūn*), they had to be treated like an immature child, whose murder could not be punished by *qisas* because their intent was the same as making a mistake. A rational person (*‘aql*) could be killed instead of a madman (*majnūn*), but not vice-versa; a madman could not be penalized for a murder they did not intend to commit. But if a judge (*qazī*) ordered that retributive killing was applicable, and the murderer who was about to be killed by the victim’s family suddenly declared that they were mad, they could still be killed. If they had proof of their insanity, the retributive killing would go forward as planned. In addition, if a person was sometimes mad but at other times lucid, and if they killed someone while in a state of lucidity (*ifaqa*), they would be treated the same as any rational person who committed murder. If this temporarily lucid person became mad after committing the murder, and was overcome by an absolute insanity (*junūn-i mutabbīq*), then their retributive killing, even if previously ordained, would be rendered void. But if the madness is not permanent, the *qisas* would not be voided.⁴³⁶

Thus, the insane were exempt from *qisas* because their intent was suspect. This was the definition of the insanity defense, which states that an insane person, not being of sound mind, does not have a verifiable intent to murder, and cannot therefore be charged as guilty. Accordingly, (s)he could not be punished. But there was clearly an awareness that this law could be misused by killers posing as madmen, who would then go about murdering without any fear of *qisas*. Anticipating this, the jurists of the *Fatāwa* (and their antecedents) made sure that there were at least three other laws governing possible legal loopholes. In the first instance, deceitful murderers would try to get away by pretending to be insane; but if *qisas* had been ruled, they

⁴³⁴ For a discussion of encephalitis in the *Zakhira-yi Nizām Shāhi*, see the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁴³⁵ There were three kinds of criminal punishment in Islamic jurisprudence: *hadd* (for crimes that violated religious boundaries, including adultery, drinking alcohol, theft, etc.), *qisas* (retaliation in cases of bodily harm, including murder), and *ta’zīr* (at the judge’s discretion, for crimes not mentioned in the Quran or Hadith). See B.S. Jain, *Administration of Justice in Seventeenth Century India: A Study of Salient Concepts of Mughal Justice* (Delhi: Metropolitan Book Co., 1970), pp. 57-77.

⁴³⁶ *Fatāwa-yi ‘Alamgiri*, *Jadeed Urdu*, Vol. 9 (Lahore), pp. 271-273. The sources cited for these rulings include the *Khulasa*, the *Fatāwa-yi Qazī Khan*, Imam Muhammad’s laws, *Fatāwa-yi Tatar Khani*, and *Fatāwa-yi Saghri*.

would have to face the consequences despite their declarations. Secondly, in cases of temporary madness, where lucidity was regained after some time, the mad could not plead innocent if they had committed murder while lucid. And thirdly, in cases of permanent insanity, even if this madness overcame them after the moment of murder, this would render their punishment void.

But this insanity defense was not foolproof. These laws, despite their comprehensive nature and anticipation of loopholes, were not always implemented to the letter in 'Alamgir's period, especially not where the emperor or the royal court was concerned. In describing seditious acts as madness, stories of insane murderers punished in Aurangzeb's period did not always follow the prescribed rules. Despite the laws for murder and the insanity defense being described in the *Fatawa*, how to punish a murderer depended much more on the specific circumstances of a given case than on any blanket law. Indeed, in some cases, the insanity defense was contravened in the process of ensuring imperial justice.

To try and understand how madness was perceived in terms of committing murder in the late-seventeenth-century Mughal Empire, we can turn to the *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, a historical account (*tarikḥ*) written by Muhammad Saqi Musta'id Khan, a Mughal court historian, shortly after Alamgir's death under the patronage of the emperor's last secretary. This text mentions a story in March 1680, a few years after the compilation of the *Fatawa*. Waris Muhammad Khan, a newsreader who had been the author of the third volume of the *Padshahnama* (cf. the opening anecdote of this chapter), was killed with a pen knife by a "mad student" (*talib-i 'ilm-i saudayi*). This student had been a protégé of Waris Khan, who was reportedly taking care of him, protecting him from molestation by other men, and making the student sleep close to him every night.⁴³⁷ Waris Khan had clearly been an important official of the Mughal court for a long time, serving as court chronicler under Shah Jahan, then as newsreader under 'Alamgir. His death was not taken lightly. From this story, we can also decipher a dialectical relationship between insanity and lack of intent. While the *Fatawa* states that the murderer had to have the intent (*'amd* or *qasd*) to kill, here the motive could not be discerned, and therefore the student was termed mad, despite not knowing if he was actually insane.

The news reports (*akbbarat*) from Jaipur shed more light on the case of Waris Khan. As a mid-ranking nobleman (*mansabdar*) in Jaipur, he had employed a bodyguard of sorts who was subject to fits of insanity. Just before the student stabbed him with a pen-knife, Waris Khan's last words were that his killer not be charged with intentional murder, and since he was insane, "nobody should hold him responsible for it, or make any claims on him". Aurangzeb heard of this incident while visiting Ajmer, and decreed in April 1680 that since the Mulla was insane, he could prove dangerous to others. To prevent him from doing any further damage, 'Alamgir had him imprisoned.⁴³⁸ Here, the insanity defense led to the madman being punished; his immunity from being considered guilty did not save him from going to prison. This is an inversion of the insanity defense and of the law for intentional murder in the *Fatawa*. At 'Alamgir's discretion, the madman's premise for his innocence – his insanity – became the very reason for his imprisonment. This shows how the emperor's direct command could override any written law about punishment for murder.

The *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri* discusses two cases of attempted murder on 'Alamgir, in both of which the emperor was visiting a mosque. The first took place on Eid al-Zuha in Delhi in March 1673. The emperor and his four sons, accompanied by their entourage, were on their way back from the mosque (presumably the Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad) when a "person of mad appearance" (*shakhs-i diwana shakl*) came close to them and flung a stick at the emperor. The stick hit the corner of the emperor's throne and fell on his knee. The macebearers in the royal procession arrested the madman, but 'Alamgir ordered them to let him go without punishing or

⁴³⁷ Saqi Musta'id Khan, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri: A History of the Emperor Aurangzeb-'Alamgir*, translated and annotated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1947), pp. 118-119.

⁴³⁸ The incident is reported in the *Jaipur Akbbarat*, 22nd year (Raghubir Singh Library, Sitamau). See Satya Prakash Sangar, *Crime and Punishment in Mughal India* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1967), pp. 99-100.

injuring him in any way.⁴³⁹ This incident might seem insignificant and unrelated to the theme of murder, but an attack on the Mughal emperor, no matter how seemingly trivial, was serious business. The madman had not caused any damage, but his approaching the royal caravan was perceived as a threat; hence the “mad appearance”. Flinging a stick at the epitome of the empire could have got him into trouble. ‘Alamgir decided not to penalize him, perhaps because of his apparent insanity, or the ineffectual nature of his attack that might have seemed almost bemusing to the monarch, or perhaps even the fact that it was a holy day (Eid al-Zuha), and he decided not to punish this brazenness.

The second case occurred on a Friday in Bijapur in December 1691. ‘Alamgir was offering his prayers at the Jama Masjid, when a mad pauper (*ashufta-sar-i parishan-waz’a*, lit. “a confused-minded one [in a] troubled situation”) unsheathed his sword and ran towards the emperor. He was immediately arrested by a bodyguard and handed over to Salabat Khan, a Mughal official.⁴⁴⁰ This attack was certainly more dangerous than in the previous story. By this time, the Mughal capital had shifted from Delhi to Aurangabad (1681), and Bijapur and Golconda had been defeated by the Mughals (1686-87). ‘Alamgir, who was going about his daily prayer routine, possibly enjoying his time in Bijapur, must have been rudely awakened from his meditations by this *fakir*-like figure suddenly running at him with a dagger. This attacker could not be allowed to escape on account of his confused mental state; the insanity defense was invalidated when it came to ensuring the personal safety of the emperor.

While it is hard to draw direct correlations between the prescriptions of the *Fatawa* about the insanity defense and actual instances of insane murderers, this legal mismatch should not be dismissed as the complete ineffectiveness or redundancy of the *Fatawa* for late-seventeenth century South Asia. Rather, the key takeaway is that laws about madness in the *Fatawa* hint at a crystallizing legal definition of insanity that incapacitated patients in certain religious and civil matters while also giving them an (albeit questionable) amount of immunity from prosecution in cases of murder. This attempt to pin down an exact demarcation of madness was not restricted to judicial proceedings; it is also evident in contemporary dictionaries and scientific texts.

Epilepsy, Melancholia, and Spirit Possession in Lexicons and Medical Treatises

Emerging definitions of madness were cemented in mid-seventeenth century Persian lexicons that circulated across the subcontinent and beyond. They were often in conversation with each other and built on previous dictionaries commissioned at the Mughal, Deccani and Safavid courts.⁴⁴¹ Earlier medical lexicons had usually been intended for specialized use by hakims, while dictionaries seldom included medical vocabulary. A rare Indo-Persian dictionary from the sixteenth century that attempted to bridge the gap between scientific and more popular realms was the *Qasida dar Lughat-i Hindi* (“Ode in Hindi Words”, 1531) by Yusuf al-Haravi or Yusufi, the first major Mughal *hakim* who also wrote the medical compendia *Jami’ al-Fawa’id* (“Compendium of Benefits”, 1521) and *Ain al-Hayat* (“The Essence of Life”, 1532).⁴⁴² But for the most part, sixteenth-century lexicons remained confined to perfunctory explications of mental illnesses without offering medical glosses for their onset or symptoms. This changed substantially in the lexicons of the seventeenth century, where we find succinct definitions of

⁴³⁹ *Ma’asir-i ‘Alamgiri*, p. 78.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 207. “Mad pauper” is Jadunath Sarkar’s translation.

⁴⁴¹ For a prehistory of Persian lexicons before the sixteenth century, see Solomon I. Baevskii (trans. N Killian, rev. John Perry), *Early Persian Lexicography: Farhangs of the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries* (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2007), especially Chapter 6, “The Rise of Persian Lexicography in India”, pp. 69-116. See also Marek Stachowski, “The Turkic Languages and Persian to c. 1700”, *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 223-246.

⁴⁴² Walter Hakala, “On Equal Terms: The Equivocal Origins of an Early Mughal Indo-Persian Vocabulary”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2015): 209-227. For a discussion of madness in Yusufi’s *Jami’ al-Fawa’id* and *Ain al-Hayat*, see the first chapter of this dissertation.

melancholia, insanity and spirit possession, as well as of allied psychological conditions ranging from the colloquial to the medical, like being mad-faced, dry-brained, epileptic and encephalitic. They clearly imbibed an unfolding discourse of madness in *akbhaq* treatises as well as Unani and Ayurvedic texts in early modern South Asia to refine their definitions of mental illnesses, while retaining the more informal connotations of these terms.

Two Persian dictionaries in particular demonstrate this lexical shift: *Burhan-i Qati'* and *Farhang-i Rashidi*. The *Burhan-i Qati'* ("The Conclusive Proof", 1652) by Burhan Khalaf al-Tabrizi was composed at the court of Abdullah Qutb Shah in Golconda, while the *Farhang-i Rashidi* ("Dictionary of Guidance", 1654) by Abdul Rashid al-Thattavi was dedicated to Shah Jahan and written in Thatta, Sindh. The *Burhan-i Qati'* is known for its encyclopaedic character, arrangement in a strict alphabetical order, and incorporation of extant medical terminology as well as rare words from previous lexicons. It was so popular through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Ghalib famously wrote a critique of it titled the *Qati'-yi Burhan* (1862). On the other hand, *Farhang-i Rashidi* detailed the rules of Persian grammar, while also covering compound words and idiomatic expressions. Apart from the *Farhang-i Rashidi*, Abdul Rashid wrote the *Muntakhab al-Lughat* ("Selection of Words", 1637) and the *Risala-yi Mu'arabat* ("Treatise on Arabicization", 1657).⁴⁴³ These dictionaries built on Mughal and Safavid lexicons from a few decades before, especially the *Farhang-i Jahangiri* ("Dictionary of Jahangir", 1607) by Mir Jamaluddin Inju and *Majma al-Furs* ("Persian Digest", 1617) by Muhammad Qasim Sururi, patronized by Jahangir in Agra and Shah Abbas in Isfahan, respectively.⁴⁴⁴ In their definitions for various mental illnesses and associated terms, these mid-seventeenth century Indo-Persian *farhangs* brought together philosophical and medical understandings that reflect the osmosis and refraction of *akbhaqi* and *tibbi* concepts.

For instance, the *Burhan-i Qati'* contained an elaborate definition for *dimagh* as a possibly metaphorical allusion to conceit, arrogance, haughtiness and pomposity, although the text noted that in Arabic, it literally meant the brain or head with which most animals were usually endowed. The dictionary went on to identify the best brains among birds as those of partridges and pheasants, and among mammals, lambs and calves. The brains of cockerels and hens were considered antidotes to the poisonous bites of snakes and scorpions. If the human brain turned dry or epileptic (*masruh*), the process of healing entailed consuming the brain of a duck suffering from vertigo (*dawar*). The dictionary further defined "dry-headed" (*khushke-sar*) or "dry-brained" (*khushke-magh*) as a condition that encompasses hot-temperedness, absurd speech, and an insane temperament (*diwana-mizaj*) brought on by excessive black bile (*saudayi*). A "mad-faced" one (*diwana-ru*) was someone whose behavior and style of walking resembled a crazy person, while "starry epilepsy" (*sar'a-yi sitaragan*) was a metaphor for the trembling and twinkling of stars. Further, it defined a mental healthcare unit (*timar*) as a space for the rehabilitation of the depressed (*khidmat-i ghamkhwari*) and caring for patients who were in the grips of a calamity. Finally, melancholia (*makholiya*) was defined as "disorder and vexation of the brain" (*khilal-o-kuft-i dimagh*) that was linked to excessive black bile and crude imagination (*khayal-i kham*), etymologically a Unani term of Arabic origin.⁴⁴⁵

It is worth comparing these Deccani lexical definitions of melancholia, epilepsy, and other ailments with contemporary *tibb* texts in order to comprehend their genesis and intellectual milieu. The largest surviving Mughal medical encyclopedia, Hakim Nuruddin Shirazi's *Ilaj-i*

⁴⁴³ Mohammad Dabirsiaqi, "Borhān-e Qāte'" (*Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, 2020); Solomon Bayevsky, "Farhang-e Rašidi" (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1999).

⁴⁴⁴ Arthur Dudley, "Chapter 4: Dictionaries Delimiting Literary Language", in *India in the Persian World of Letters: Khān-i Arzū Among the Eighteenth-Century Philologists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 142-149; Shahriyar Naqvi, *Farhang-navisi-yi Farsi dar Hind wa Pakistan* (Tehran: 1962).

⁴⁴⁵ I have accessed the Persian manuscript of the *Burhan-i Qati'* in the National Archives of India, New Delhi (Oriental Records Division, No. 143, Acc. No. 2629), pp. 337, 389, 407, 612, 912, as well as a published version of the *Burhan-i Qati'*, *Jild 1-5*, ed. Dr Muhammad Moin (Tehran: Sarmayi Kitabfurushi-yi Ibn Sina, 1333 S.H./1954).

Dara Shukohi (1646), is broadly divided into two sections, theoretical medicine (*'ilmi tibb*) and practical medicine (*'amli tibb*). It describes twenty-four kinds of mental illnesses, a significant advance from only ten categories described in sixteenth-century medical treatises. It begins the thirteenth expression (*izhar*) on melancholia by citing the Islamic polymath al-Razi, and defines melancholia as an “affliction where corrupted thoughts can become overwhelming for a patient of fear, sorrow, grieving and delusions (*vahm*)”. The text delineates the symptoms of melancholia as ranging from paranoid delusions and crippling grief to stomach-ache, bad complexion, indigestion, vomiting, and excess salivation. Among other remedies, Shirazi prescribes bloodletting (*fasd*) from the *asliq*/ wrist artery and *aslim*/ foot artery to treat melancholia, advising continued venesection if the blood is thick and black, and clotting at the central vein when it turns thin and red.⁴⁴⁶

In addition to the *Tuhfat al-Atibba*, discussed before in the context of encephalitis, medical treatises from ‘Alamgir’s reign bear testament to changing diagnoses and treatments for epilepsy and madness that can be juxtaposed with the dictionary definitions outlined above. For instance, Hakim Abu al-Fath Khairi’s *Dar ul-Shifa-yi Aurang Shahi* (“Hospitals in Aurangzeb’s Reign”, 1670), based on Ayurvedic sources, contains a chapter on epilepsy (*sara*), known as *mirgi* in Sanskrit, that starts with a brief description in poetic form:

*Reports of the faithful of the sciences transmit,
That epilepsy descends on a serene head.
When a hair of bone emerges from the head,
Knowledge, reason, and sense are ruined.
Learn the four types of this ailment.
If the cause of the ailment is old age,
Medicines cannot make it leave the body.
If it occurs in youth then take [the medicines],
Know with certainty that they will liberate.
Extracting a little blood from the cephalic vein,
Brings relief to the salt in the freckle.*⁴⁴⁷

گرد اخبار صادقان فنون،
که صرع شود بسر سکون.
چون ز سر موی استخوان آید،
دانش و عقل و هوش برباید.
چار نوع است این علل کن یاد.
گر شوند این علل بسال کهن،
از دواها نمیرود از تن.
گر در آغاز دارد پس بکنند،
با یقین دان ز صرع باز رهند.
و زر خون است زدن رگی قیفال،
آورد سود به شور در خال.

The text goes on to identify the four kinds of epilepsy: caused by excessive bile (*talkha*), wind (*baad*), phlegm (*balgham*), or by a combination of these three Ayurvedic humors. Wind-related epilepsy was perhaps the most common kind, where the patient’s eyes swirled, their body trembled, and they frothed at the mouth. It had several sub-categories including patients possessed by spirits (*sar-bhuti* in Sanskrit), hallucinations (*vahm*) which tended to madness (*divanagi*), epileptic seizures among female adolescent patients catalyzed by their menarche (*haiṣ*), and convulsions brought on by ingestion of myrobalan, mercury, turquoise, or iron.⁴⁴⁸ These classifications of epilepsy do not seem to have existed in Indo-Persian medical manuscripts even fifty years before. Thus, when the *Burhan-i Qati* offered definitions of starry epilepsy or being dry-brained, it was possibly hinting at more medicalized notions of epilepsy in Ayurvedic and Unani texts predating the *Dar ul-Shifa-yi Aurang Shahi*. Even though the latter Mughal treatise was written eighteen years after the Golconda dictionary, we may read these texts against the grain to understand how their epistemes of mental disorder overlapped and informed each other.

The second dictionary from the mid-seventeenth century, *Farhang-i Rashidi* (1654), in contrast to *Burhan-i Qati*, defines various terms for demonic possession. *Div-keburda* was a person seized by jinns, who had visibly been robbed of his consciousness, although the author, Abdul

⁴⁴⁶ Shirazi, *Ilajāt-i Dara Shukohi*, Vol. 2, Ms. Supplément Persan 342B, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, ff. 82b-85a. Another manuscript copy of this text is Persian Ms. 201, Wellcome Collection, London.

⁴⁴⁷ Khairi, *Dar ul-Shifa-yi Aurang Shahi*, No. 1973, Hakim Mohammed Saeed Central Library, Jamia Hamdard University, New Delhi, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁸ *Dar ul-Shifa-yi Aurang Shahi*, pp. 17-18.

Rashid al-Thattavi, notes that the Persian meaning of being frenzied (*shorida*) was more appropriate. A synonymous term was *div-ẓada*, meaning someone who was arrested by spirits. Thattavi cites the eleventh-century poet Fakhr al-Din Gorgani,⁴⁴⁹ who wrote that the spirit-possessed were likely to become unconscious, groan loudly, and then fall silent. A third, related term was *div-kaluj*, connoting an epileptic child (*kudak-i masruh*), suggesting an inherent correlation between spirit-madness and epilepsy. Finally, *div-deed* or *div-deeda* (lit. “one who has seen a spirit”) is simply defined in one word as a madman (*divana*).⁴⁵⁰ As I have argued in my third chapter, occult manuals like *Risala dar Ta’bir-i Khwab* (1600) and *Uqul-i Asharab* (1673) engaged closely with ideas of jinn possession, while medical discussions of *waswas* (Satanic whisperings) occurred across Mughal and Deccani pharmacopoeias and *tibbi* treatises like *Mizan al-Taba’i-yi Qutb Shabi* (1620) and *Dastur al-Hunud* (1633). Building on these texts, it is not surprising to find definitions for demonic possession in the *Farhang-i Rashidi*. What is new, however, is the decidedly medical connotations of jinn bewitchment in Unani manuscripts that crossed over into occult sciences and vice-versa, together informing lexical taxonomies as in the *Farhang-i Rashidi*.

A case in point is the *Risala-yi Taskhir* (“Treatise on Enchantment/ Captivation”), an anonymous treatise on demonology and magic from late-seventeenth-century Mughal India that reveals a deeper engagement with spirit possession, its causes and treatments, than preceding occult treatises had propounded. It is organized in twelve chapters, ranging from the examination of spirits and fairies to their methods of possession (*asib*), their entrapment in human existence, their besiegement (*hisar*), ways to resist their lures and charms, and sorcery and magic (*sibr-o-jadu*).⁴⁵¹ The sections on possession detail the physical impact of spirits entering the enchanted person’s body, rendering them epileptic (*masruh*) and developing tonsilitis or quinsy (*ẓahr-bad*). A method to detect their presence in a person’s body was to recite a Quranic verse (*gharimat*), Surat al-Namal (Verse 30), with the names of Allah seven or nine times, then smelling bitter oil, lighting a candle with it, and carrying it close to the epileptic patient to see if their shadow was cast in an eastward direction. Another test was to recite the Quranic verse twelve times and rubbing a block of figs on their face to see if it twitched.⁴⁵² On the other hand, the besiegement of ghosts and goblins (*ifariyat*) could manifest in seven contradictory ways among the possessed: make them hungry, satiated, frightened, fearless, drunk, sensible, or mute and blind (*gang-o-kur*). In the severest of cases, incantations that summoned Baktush, the king of the jinns, making the epileptic patient kneel on their toes, and burning fragrant aloe-wood (*‘aud-i anbar*) in all four directions around them, all proved to be beneficial to exorcise the spirit from their body.⁴⁵³

Another medical tract from ‘Alamgir’s reign is Hakim Abuji bin Husamuddin Patani’s *Kifayat al-Atibba* (“Efficiency of Physicians”, 1690). It contains a section on melancholia (*makholiya*) that recounts snippets of a poem about melancholic patients from the *Shifa al-Maraz* written in Gujarat in 1388. This act of regurgitating a literary description of two kinds of madness stemming from their garrulity or laconic demeanor indicates the continued echoes of this pivotal disquisition three hundred years later without needing to cite the source of the poem.⁴⁵⁴ Patani adds that talkative patients of melancholia were likely to be haunted by a fear of death, as visions tinted in red, yellow, green and black continually flashed before their eyes. They

⁴⁴⁹ Gorgani’s most famous work, *Vis-u-Ramin* (1054), was a love story that reconfigured many preexisting literary tropes and, according to Cameron Cross, heralded the beginning of New Persian. See Cross, *Love at a Cross: The New Persian Romance in a Global Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023).

⁴⁵⁰ Al-Madani al-Thattavi, *Farhang-i Rashidi*, I.O. Islamic 848, British Library, London, ff. 243b-245a.

⁴⁵¹ Anon, *Risala-yi Taskhir*, part of a *Majmu’a* (1710) compiled by Ghausi bin Ghulam Mir Hasan, Tibb. 168, Acc. 1798, Salar Jung Museum and Library, Hyderabad, ff. 107b-125b.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, Chapter 2: “on examining the possession of spirits and fairies” (در امتحان آسیب دیو و پری), ff. 108a-b.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, Chapters 3 and 4, ff. 108b-109a. I thank Evan Grennon for helping me translate the Arabic verses.

⁴⁵⁴ For the original Persian poem from the *Shifa al-Maraz* and my English translation of it, see the first chapter of this dissertation.

desired isolation and darkness, lied a lot, and in their madness (*divanagi*) sometimes laughed and sometimes cried. With the other kind of melancholia, patients were likely to remain silent and inhibited. They grew thinner and weaker with each passing day, had stomach constipation, and developed hollows under their eyes. They would not reply when spoken to, being afraid to voice their thoughts. Their breath turned cold, pulse hardened and erratic, and urine clear.⁴⁵⁵

Patani prescribes a range of treatments for these two types of melancholia that showcase an active engagement with previous cures in Indo-Persian medical manuals by the late-seventeenth century. For the talkative kind of melancholia, the *Kifayat al-Atibba* suggests massaging the patient's head with phalsa oil, washing it with water, and rubbing violet oil (*roghan-i banafsha*) and oil from water lilies (*roghan-i nilofar*) in their nose to remove dryness from their brain. To settle their stomach, the patient had to eat a paste made of cucumbers, pumpkin and camphor kneaded in almond oil. This paste could also be applied as a salve on their head. In addition, the text recommends a diet of cooked chickens and pigeons, almond oil, grape juice, fattening halwas, a sheep-head soup, and sheep-head roasted in oil and served with sugar and white bread. On the other hand, for the silent kind of melancholia, the text recommended bloodletting from the cephalic vein till such time as the black blood turned completely red, harking back to the treatment mentioned in the *Ilaj-i Dara Shukohi*.⁴⁵⁶

Known variously as venesection and phlebotomy, bloodletting has a long history beyond the Unani humoral system, in Chinese, European and Ottoman medical cultures.⁴⁵⁷ In Mughal India, Hakim Muhammad Beg worked at the court of Humayun and wrote the *Dastur al-Fasd* ("Rules for Bloodletting", 1537), while Hakim Momna Shirazi and Hakim Shaikh Hasan Hassu were both known for their bloodletting skills during the time of Jahangir.⁴⁵⁸ With respect to melancholia, epilepsy, encephalitis and madness, venesection was necessary because excess blood in the brain affected its powers of reasoning. Everything from lancets to leeches to cups could be applied to the arm to drain the excess blood, although the use of cupping therapy (*'ilaj bil-hijama*) was the most effective in creating suction. Sometimes, as in the above description of melancholia from the *Kifayat al-Atibba*, madness caused black bile to mix with blood and make it impure, in which case it was necessary to draw blood from the cephalic vein using lancets till such time as the blood became pure red and there was no trace of blackness left.⁴⁵⁹

A later medical text from the end of 'Alamgir's reign, Hakim Akbar Arzani's *Tibb-i Akbari* ("Medicine of Akbar Arzani", 1701), written in Delhi,⁴⁶⁰ noted that bloodletting was necessary to cure melancholia, stressing the need to purify the blood since black bile may have caused the red blood to blacken. Arzani suggested three different strategies depending on the

⁴⁵⁵ Patani, *Kifayat al-Atibba*, Tibb. 193, Acc. No. 1823, Salar Jung Museum and Library, Hyderabad, ff. 23b-24a. Another copy of this text is RAS Ellis Persian 14, in the Royal Asiatic Society Library, London.

⁴⁵⁶ Patani, *Kifayat al-Atibba*, f. 24a.

⁴⁵⁷ See, among others, Guenter Risse, "The Renaissance of Bloodletting: A Chapter in Modern Therapeutics," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (1979): 3-22; Peter Brain, *Galen on Bloodletting: A Study of the Origins, Development and Validity of His Opinions, with a Translation of the Three Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Shigehisa Kuriyama, "Interpreting the History of Bloodletting," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (1995): 11-46; and K. Codell Carter, *The Decline of Therapeutic Bloodletting and the Collapse of Traditional Medicine* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

⁴⁵⁸ Arshad Islam, "Unani methods of cure in the Indian subcontinent: an analytical study," *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2018): 480-487.

⁴⁵⁹ Cupping therapy continues to be practiced in modern-day South Asia, e.g., under the aegis of Ministry of AYUSH in India. See Jamal Akhtar and M. Khalid Siddiqui, "Utility of Cupping Therapy (Hijamat) in Unani Medicine," *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2008): 572-574; and S. M. Abbas Zaidi, S. S. Jameel, Kehkashan Jafri, Shariq A. Khan and Ehsan Ahmad, "*Ilaj bil hijamah* (Cupping Therapy) in Unani System of Medicine: Anecdotal Practice to Evidence-Based Therapy," *Acta medico-historia Adriatica*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2016): 81-94.

⁴⁶⁰ For more on 'Alamgir-era physicians like Arzani, their accomplishments and works, as well as their legacy, see Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman (trans. Zakaria M Virk), *History of Unani Medicine in Dehli, 17th Century to 20th Century: Biographies of 261 Physicians* (Aligarh: Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine and Sciences, 2020).

color of blood drawn from the affected site, and also warned of the perils of excessive bleeding:

If they find a surfeit of blood, lance the first cephalic vein, then note whether the blood is purely black, mixed with red, or purely red. Wherever it is black, continue [the bleeding] till such time as the color of blood no longer changes, or they are afraid that [the patient] might fall from debility. And the blood signals and indicates whether the combustible substance [of black bile], despite being firmly lodged in the brain, has flown into the body as well. Wherever [the blood] is black mixed with red, bleed in moderation, and do not be excessive. Wherever it is red and pure, it can be known that the substance [of black bile] in the arteries of the brain is contained, and nothing from it flows into the body. Then change the cephalic vein whenever it is desirable to [stop and] inject enema, especially among women whose menstrual bleeding is the cause. After the venesection, withdraw [the lancet].⁴⁶¹

Arzani's *Tibb-i Akbari* marks an apogee in the production of medical literature about mental illnesses by the turn of the eighteenth century. Together with the *Mizān al-Tibb* ("Scales of Medicine", 1708) by the same author, it was an influential tract that circulated across the Persianate world for decades and conducted significant experiments in order to explain madness and allied mental illnesses.⁴⁶² It is one of the first South Asian medical texts to identify schizophrenia (*sauda-yi tibbi*) as a variant of melancholia, along with another category that he calls "*muree-sauda*" (possibly close to our modern concept of clinical depression).⁴⁶³ Further, the *Tibb-i Akbari* offered a much clearer definition of insanity (*divanagi*), as "a calamity that becomes attached to the brain, because of which the functions of the brain's powers become invalid, or make it defective, or agitated in accordance with the weakening power of reason."⁴⁶⁴ This definition is at once philosophical, jurisprudential, scientific and lexical, signalling the intermixing of *akhlaq*, *fiqh*, *tibb* and *farhang* traditions over the preceding few decades.

In this context, both the *Tibb-i Akbari* and *Mizān al-Tibb* enumerate more subtypes of insanity than previous treatises while providing clearer glosses on rarer disorders. For instance, although lycanthropy (*qutrub*) was often included in Unani texts as a kind of madness, it was not well-defined as an affliction where patients think of themselves as werewolves. The *Tibb-i Akbari* classifies lycanthropy as a subtype of madness (*divanagi*), stating:

Its indication is that the patient is extremely morose and never rests for more than an hour in one place. He is perpetually anxious and absurd, and is suspicious that people have intentions of killing him. For this reason, he remains hidden during the day in tombs and desolate places, only appearing at night. While some patients of lycanthropy are not scared [for their lives], they have an extremely acerbic face, regrets, yellow color,

⁴⁶¹ Muhammad Akbar ibn Muhammad Shah Arzani, *Tibb-i-Akbari*, Vol. 1 (Bombay: 1863), pp. 24-25.

⁴⁶² See Arzani, *Tibb-i Akbari*, "Chapter 1: On the Diseases of the Head" (*Bab-i avval: dar amraz-i sar*), pp. 5-52, esp. sections on melancholia (*malikholiya*), various kinds of madness (*unvah-i divanagiba*), confusion of reason and delirium (*ikhtilat-i 'aql va buz'yan*), lovesickness (*'ishq*), and epilepsy (*sara'*); and Arzani, *Mizān al-Tibb* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1870), Chapter 1, pp. 29-40. While J.G. Balfour has translated the section on madness in the *Tibb-i Akbari*, the chapter on mental illnesses in *Mizān al-Tibb* has been translated by NK Aggarwal. See Balfour, "An Arab Physician on Insanity," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 22 (1876): 241-249; and Aggarwal, "Classic Text No. 93: 'On the Diseases of the Head' in the *Scale of Medicine* by Muhammad Akbar Arzānī [d. 1722]," *History of Psychiatry*, SAGE, vol. 24, no. 1 (2012): 106-117.

⁴⁶³ Although the *DSM-V* classifies schizophrenia as a thought disorder and depression as a mood disorder, the *Tibb-i Akbari* does not seem to make a clear distinction between the two.

⁴⁶⁴ In the original Persian, p. 22: "*afat dar dimagh la-haq shavad wa bad-an sabab, af'al-i qunwatha-yi dimaghi batil shavad ya naqis gardad wa ya muztarib ba-hasb-i z'af-o-qunwat-i sabab*." See also Balfour (1876), p. 241, who translates this as "a state of agitation and distraction, with alteration or loss of reason, caused by weakness or disease affecting the brain."

dry tongue, and intense body heat. It is possible that they may attack people.⁴⁶⁵

This description is in sync with later definitions of lycanthropy, where patients were compelled to “shun the company of mankind, to seek out solitude and frequent cemeteries, and to roam about aimlessly with hollow eyes and [be] lost in gloom.”⁴⁶⁶

Arzani’s *Mizān al-Tibb* marks the ending point of my dissertation, a culmination of medical textual production about mental illness over the preceding two centuries. It is much more lucid and nuanced in its categorizations of brain disorder, in suggesting innovative treatments for them, and in citing medieval Islamic authorities with caution. For instance, the *Mizān al-Tibb* differentiates between melancholia (*malikholiya*) and insanity (*junun*) thus:

If there is any kind of insanity, then its severity is greater than the severity of melancholia. Some [physicians] have counted [insanity] among the types of melancholia. But in reality, it [insanity] is separate from melancholia because among the causes for insanity, the burning of a non-natural humor is a precondition. And from the burning of a natural humor emerges melancholia, not insanity.⁴⁶⁷

The difference between the burning (*abtarag*) of a natural humor leading to melancholia, and that of a non-natural humor (*khilat-i ghair-tabi’i*) causing insanity, hints at an understanding of madness in the Unani system that went beyond Galenic humoral theory. In Galenic theory, three principal spirits or pneumata were associated with different parts of the body: the animal spirit (*ruh-i hayvani*) with the heart, the natural spirit (*qunwat al-tabiyah*) with the liver, and the psychic spirit (*ruh-i nafsani*) with the brain.⁴⁶⁸ This third spirit could well have been a supernatural force (*jinn* or *div*), whose possession of the brain caused a mental imbalance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that a definitive transformation in ethical, legal, and medical conceptions of madness and brain disorders was unfolding over the mid-to-late seventeenth century in South Asia. Tracing the philosophical foundations of insanity in the Mughal Empire leads us to a deeply entrenched Perso-Arabic ethical (*akblaq*) tradition in the writings of Tusi, Dawani and Kashifi, where irrationality and unreason were manifestations of a moral crisis, brought on by vices of the soul, an excess of anger or grief, a misguided sense of justice, or dereliction of duty. Building on this, Mughal and Deccani chroniclers by the 1630s were more cautious when deploying the label of madness to dismiss the agency of political rebels. Although defectors like Khan Jahan Lodi were rebuked for their lack of rationality and faced decapitation for their treason, during Shah Jahan’s reign, nobles and theologians alike were gradually resorting to legal accusations of mental incapacity. They sought to investigate the psychological states of unorthodox actors, from seemingly ineffective governors like Asghar Beg who could be deprived of their *jagirs* to religious non-conformists like Sarmad who were

⁴⁶⁵ Arzani, *Tibb-i Akbari*, p. 26: Chapter 11 on various kinds of insanity. In Persian: “alamatish an ast ki bimar baghayat-i tursh-ruyi bashad wa dar yakja bish az yak sa’at qarar nagirad. Wa dayim mutaraddud wa bihuda gardan bashad wa az mardum kaman burad ki dar qasd-i kushan-i vei and. Wa bad-an sabab rozana dar maqabir wa mavaza’-yi viran poshida manad, wa shabangah birun ayad. Wa ba’zi khudavandan-i qutrub nami tarsand lekin baghayat-i tursh-ru wa mutasif wa zard-rang wa zaban-i khusbk wa mufrit-ul-hararat mibashand. Wa bashad ki bar mardum hamla kunand.” See also Balfour (1876), p. 246.

⁴⁶⁶ Manfred Ullmann, “Kutrub”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, accessed online on 17 July 2024.

⁴⁶⁷ Arzani, *Mizān al-Tibb*, p. 35: chapter (*fasl*) 12 on insanity (*junun* yani *divanagi*). In Persian: “bar jununi ke bashad, martuba-yi junun balatar az martuba-yi malikholiya ast. Wa ba’zi dar aqsam-i malikholiya shamurda and. Ama fi al-haqiqat, vei ghair-i an ast zira ki dar asbab-i junun, abtarag-i khilat-i ghair tabi’i shart ast. Che khilat-i tabi’i agar basuzad, malikholiya badis kunad, na junun.” See also Aggarwal (2012), p. 114.

⁴⁶⁸ Emilie Savage-Smith and Peter E Pormann, *Medieval Islamic medicine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007), p. 45.

executed on ostensible charges of heresy when they threatened to upend the political future of a new sovereign.

The compilation of the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri* around 1675 crystallized this legalistic turn by detailing precedents and penalties for madness in cases of fulfilling Islamic obligations, as well as in civil matters like marriage, divorce and guardianship. Although it explained the insanity defense, actual cases of murder recorded in contemporary chronicles and newsletters (*akhbarat*)⁴⁶⁹ did not necessarily follow these jurisprudential prescriptions. Finally, a parallel attempt to broaden and refine extant classifications and treatments for mental illnesses like melancholia, encephalitis and epilepsy was evidenced in Unani and Ayurvedic treatises composed under Aurangzeb 'Alamgir. This sophistication of medical knowledge was refracted through contemporary Indo-Persian dictionaries like *Burhan-i Qati'* and *Farhang-i Rashidi* as well as occult treatises on spirit possession.

Putting these different genres of texts in conversation with each other allows us to discern a heightened interest in comprehending the multifarious manifestations of insanity in early modern South Asia. There was a discursive shift away from understanding madness as a medicalized mental illness sometimes overlapping with, but mostly distinct from, a political and gendered understanding of rebellion against Mughal patriarchal authority, or a poetic articulation of lovesickness and unreason, as in the second and third chapters of this dissertation. By contrast, in this chapter I have emplotted various events and texts from the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb 'Alamgir to sketch the close intertwining of ethical, legal, and medical conceptions of madness.

The start of the eighteenth century marked a gradual epistemic rupture from this integrated, holistic view of madness, as I will explain in the epilogue.

⁴⁶⁹ I have unfortunately not been able to fully explore potential references to madness in the *akhbarat* from 'Alamgir's period, especially in the *Akhbarat-i Darbar-i Mu'alla* from Prince 'Azam's court in Gujarat. I hope to make better use of these documents while converting this dissertation to a book.

Epilogue

This dissertation ends with discussions of insanity around the turn of the eighteenth century in South Asia. Hakim Arzani's *Mizān al-Tibb* (1708) was completed one year after the death of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb 'Alamgir, heralding what earlier historians considered the end of the high period of the Mughal Empire and the beginning of imperial decline. This view has been substantially challenged by recent scholarship, which has shown the vibrancy of regional states that emerged in Afghanistan, Punjab, Awadh, Bengal, Jaipur, and Hyderabad as successors to the disintegrating empire,⁴⁷⁰ even as older nerve-centers like Delhi and Lahore remained politically active in various ways.⁴⁷¹ What did this radical reconfiguration of the political landscape mean for a changing discourse of madness?

For one, it spurred the continued patronage of scientific texts. Many Unani Indo-Persian texts have survived from the early-eighteenth century. These include *Sehat ul-Amraz* ("Health of Diseases", 1722) by Shaikh Pir Muhammad Gujarati; *Ta'lim-i 'Ilaj* ("Pedagogy of Cures", 1725) by Abu al-Zafar Husain Yar, dedicated to the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah Rangeela; *Muntakhab-i Dava al-Hind* ("Selections from Indian Medicine", 1725) by Hakim Kotli Marham Rangari; *Qawanin al-'Ilaj* ("Rules for Cure", 1739) by Hakim 'Alavi Khan Dehlavi; *Majmu'a-yi Baqa'i* ("Compilation for Perpetuity", 1743) by Muhammad Isma'il Baqa Khan; and *Qanun-i Sikandari* ("Statute of Sikandar", 1747) by Sikandar bin Ismail, dedicated to the Nawab of Arcot. All of them discussed mental illnesses in an increasingly detailed fashion, folding in Ayurvedic knowledge, drawing from earlier Indo-Persian treatises, and experimenting with new categories and treatments. For the first time, the implementation of these diagnoses and remedies was recorded by practicing *hakims*. *Matab-i Hakim 'Alavi Khan* (1735) is a rare source that documents Hakim 'Alavi Khan Shirazi's case notes for patients suffering from melancholia and madness in Delhi. In writing down the preexisting conditions of his patients, logging their symptoms and the cures and medicines he administered, and how effective they proved in the patients' recovery, we acquire a novel window into the validity of these medical prescriptions.⁴⁷²

For another, poetic innovations with madness marched on full steam ahead. The Urdu poet Siraj Aurangabadi (1716-1763) was famously driven to wildness (*wahshat*) and spiritual attraction (*jazb*) in his youth. Siraj's real-life events were reflected in his verse-poem (*masnavi*), the *Bustan-i Khayal* ("The Garden of Imagination", 1738). Siraj's poetry discusses the onset of insanity when his lover went to Hyderabad for military service and turned cold when pursued by the narrator. At age fifteen, he began wandering the hills reciting Persian ghazals to the winds, and was in the throes of love-madness (*junun*) for seven years. This apparently caused his father to place chains around his ankles, and his family to ostracize him. Scott Kugle argues that Siraj's homosexual affair with a Hindu soldier directly inspired this poem, but we must be careful to not undertake an autobiographical reading since it was inflected by contemporary literary

⁴⁷⁰ Amidst a growing scholarship on the eighteenth century, see Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986); Purnima Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Munis Faruqi, "At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad and Eighteenth-Century India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2009): 5-43; Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1995); Karen Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1979): 151-167; Tilottoma Mukherjee, *Political Culture and Economy in Eighteenth-century Bengal: Networks of Exchange, Consumption and Communication* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013); and Sachi Patel, *Politics and Religion in Eighteenth-Century India: Jaisingh II and the Rise of Public Theology in Gaudiya Vaishnavism* (New York: Routledge, 2022). Scholarship on the Maratha Empire, the biggest political entity in eighteenth-century South Asia, is too voluminous to be cited here.

⁴⁷¹ For a reappraisal of urban politics in the capital after 'Alamgir's death, see Abhishek Kaicker, *The King and the People: Sovereignty and Popular Politics in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1739* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁴⁷² See *Matab-i Hakim 'Alavi Khan* (New Delhi: Hakeem Muhammad Saeed Central Library, Jamia Hamdard University, No. 2002), pp. 82-164 on brain disorders, especially pp. 170-147 on patients of melancholia and insanity.

conventions.⁴⁷³ Another poet, Khwaja Mir Dard (1720-85) of Delhi, wrote that his process of religious self-discovery manifested as madness. Driven by a desire to “swim in the ocean of Reality”, he mused about being a crazy poet who was “brimful of madness”. In this context, he compared himself with Prophet Muhammad, who was eventually declared not mad by his companions in Sura 81 of the Quran.⁴⁷⁴ The trope of poets embracing madness is also mentioned in a later Persian *tazkira* (biographical compendium of poets) titled *Safina-yi Hindi* (“The Vessel of Hindi”, c. 1810) by Kayasth Bhagwan Das Hindi. It recounts how a poet from Jaunpur, Maulvi Muhammad Hikmat, went completely mad at age thirty, was attacked by children when he ran through the city’s bazaar in a delirious state, and wrote the following couplet: “My head has become a field of poppies thanks to the children’s stones/ madness is blossoming, the season of spring has finally come!”⁴⁷⁵

A remarkable text that exemplifies the conjunction of medical knowledge and literary outpourings is the famous Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir’s *masnavi*, *Khwab-o-Khayal-i Mir* (“The Dream and Fantasy of Mir”, 1752). This Urdu narrative poem offers a unique insight into the conceptualization of madness in late Mughal India. Mir’s *masnavi* details the narrator’s descent into madness, attraction to the moon, visions of an elusive fairy-like beauty, confinement and medical treatment for his insanity, and eventual recovery. It thus experimented with the trope of madness (*junun* and *diwanagi*) stemming from the pain of separation from the beloved, a literary metaphor that, as we have seen, was repeatedly invoked in early modern Persian and Braj poetry. At the same time, Mir consciously wove medical knowledge into his *masnavi* about the various kinds of mental illness and their prescribed treatments. The poem begins by outlining the narrator’s state of grief and anxiety, and his journey from Agra to Delhi, which marked his descent from melancholia into madness. His growing insanity was brought on by visions of a moon-fairy who quickly became his beloved. Mir was clearly playing with the poetic trope of lovesickness in the *Layla-Majnun* and *Yusuf-Zulaykha* legends. The poetic narrator then sought treatment with exorcists and other occult practitioners before being misdiagnosed by Unani physicians. His increasing madness led to his solitary confinement, revealing late Mughal attitudes to isolating and ostracizing the insane.

The most pivotal moment in the *Masnavi-yi Khwab-o-Khayal* that demonstrates the incorporation of medical knowledge is when Mir describes the narrator’s confinement and process of bloodletting by using lancets to treat his madness:

*The apocalypse of madness continued to roar in my head,
My heart continued to be drawn to the mountain and desert...
The head was enamored by [that fairy’s] knotted hair,
The step was ringed by listening for [the sound of] their chain.
The madness of the sigh got after my soul,
O friend! I was admitted to prison.
[They] locked me up in a dungeon,
So that the fire of madness be extinguished.
[They] gave me a morsel of bread once [a day],
[They] gave me a sip of water with difficulty...
One day I was sitting the whole evening,
[But] lucidity had not come over me yet,*

⁴⁷³ Kugle, *When Sun Meets Moon: Gender, Eros, and Ecstasy in Urdu Poetry* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 29-33, 37-41, 76-99.

⁴⁷⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1976), pp. 40, 115.

⁴⁷⁵ Bhagvan Das Hindi, *Safina-yi Hindi*, ed. S. Shah Md. Ataur Rahman (Patna: Institute of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Arabic and Persian, 1958), p. 63; cited in Stefano Pellò, “Persian Poets on the Streets: The Lore of Indo-Persian Poetic Circles in Late Mughal India,” *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*, ed. Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield (London: Open Book Publishers, 2015), p. 316.

*When my friends made a befitting prediction.
 [They] found no fault in my blood.
 Even though they supposedly took only a little of my blood
 They drew so much blood that I became breathless.
 For a long time the blood kept flowing
 I remained unconscious that entire night...
 [I was] poked by lancets so much that they didn't hurt [anymore]
 They pricked me like tea leaves from someone's eyelashes.
 My palpitating garment was soaked in blood
 Yet the wound reached the vein of life.
 [My] pure blood kept dripping for a long time
 I was carried away by the wine of senselessness...
 After some [time], my eyes started to focus
 My sight, too, began to function [regularly].
 The bags of incapacity were packed for departure
 [My] departed strength turned its face the other way.
 Who was bothered about my life [anymore]?
 And yet, I was extremely strong-willed.
 Strength seemed to return to my limbs
 I had more days yet to live in this world.⁴⁷⁶*

The *masnavi* ends by noting the complete recovery of the narrator, as he transposes his erstwhile madness and lovesickness onto the imaginary moon-faced beloved. The legacy of Mir's description of moon-madness helps us think more broadly about changing configurations of madness on the brink of British colonialism in South Asia.⁴⁷⁷

In sum, a gradual epistemic transformation was underway in the first half of the eighteenth century. The impulse to make the narrator in Mir's *masnavi* convalesce in isolation suggests a gradual turn towards the ostracism of mental patients. The continued use of Unani and Ayurvedic treatments for their cure, however, hints at the resilience of this hybrid medical tradition that was not immediately displaced by the concomitant rise of lunatic asylums and Western psychiatry.

⁴⁷⁶ Maulana Abdul Bari Isa (ed.), *Kulliyat-i Mir: Tartib-i Jadeed* (Lucknow: Naval Kishore Press, 1971), pp. 972-73.

⁴⁷⁷ This poem, read alongside Hakim Arzani's *Tibb-i Akbari* and *Mizan al-Tibb*, is the basis for my forthcoming article, titled "Madness in the Urdu Poetry of Late Mughal India: Mir Taqī Mir's *Masnāvi-yi Khwāb-o-Khayāl*", in *Muslim Intellectual History in Mughal South Asia, UC Berkeley Conference Proceedings* (Cambridge University Press, 2025).

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