

HOSHRUBA: The Land and the Tilism¹

Translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi

A First Translation of the World's First Magical Fantasy Epic "Tilism-e Hoshruha"
(1883-1893) by Muhammad Husain Jah

Introduction

The world's first and longest magical fantasy Hoshruha was compiled in the Urdu language by two of its greatest prose writers. Spread over eight thousand pages, it reached the summits of popularity and acclaim never attained by any other epic in the history of Urdu literature. But the richness of its language and its length deterred translations for more than one hundred and twenty-five years.

Filled with dazzling illusions and occult realms inhabited by powerful sorceresses and diabolic monsters, Hoshruha had a fixed life, and a designated conqueror who would use its magical key to unravel it one day.

The first book of the Hoshruha series begins with the giant Laqa entering Hoshruha's protection, and its sorcerer emperor finding himself at war with Laqa's arch fiend, Amir Hamza, the Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction, who pursues the giant with his numerous tricksters and a young prince—the yet to be known conqueror-designate of Hoshruha. When the prince is kidnapped by the devious trickster girls sent by the sorcerer emperor, it falls to an extraordinary trickster and a rebel sorceress to continue his mission.

Of the False God Laqa Seeking Refuge With King Suleiman Amber-Hair of Mount Agate, and of Amir Hamza's Armies Arriving There in Pursuit of Him

*Sing O minstrel for my cup of life brims over
Under the nine vaults of heaven
From the revolutions of cosmos I intone like the pipe
At the fate of Jamshed and the fortunes of Kaikhusru*

*The master of discourse intricate and obscure
Has masterly adorned the lovely bride of the narrative*

The cupbearers of nocturnal revelries and bibbers from the cup of inspiration pour the vermilion wine of inscription into the paper's goblet thus:

When Amir Hamza's armies drove away the false god Laqa from his previous abode, Bakhtiarak, the devil-designate of Laqa's court and the man of ill council, advised Laqa to head to the dominions of King Suleiman Amber-Hair of Mount Agate who was the master of innumerable armies and mighty warriors. The lands of Mount Agate were linked to Hoshruha, the tilism ruled by its master Emperor Afrasiyab.

*He is the lord of throne, insignia and crown
Lord of the fish in the sea and moon in the heavens
His grandeur is complete without the aid of coronet
At his name the heavens tremble and present tribute*

Laqa followed the iniquitous Bakhtiarak's advice and headed for the fortress city of Mount Agate. At the end of his long trek, when he arrived near its borders, the spies of King Suleiman Amber-Hair alerted him. The monarch decorated the city with lights, readied trays of gold and jewels for offerings, and marched out with his retinue to greet Laqa.

Suleiman Amber-Hair brought Laqa into the fortress city and conducted him into the royal palace with great fanfare. Nobles, ministers of state and privy councillors paid their respects to Laqa. The false god was seated on the royal throne encrusted with precious and rare jewels and gave audience within the cluster of dancers, silver-thighed cupbearers, and honey-tongued and jovial singers, whose sweet strains caused every eye and ear to become transfixed with wonder. Before long, the rounds of red wine made everyone forgetful of the fickle ways of time.

Next, the three commanders of King Suleiman Amber-Hair's armies presented themselves. They were:

Manzur Crow-Eye – Nephew to King Suleiman and master of several hundred thousand warriors

Nazir Crow-Eye – Nephew to King Suleiman and master of several hundred thousand warriors

Lalan Red-Robe – Supreme Commander of King Suleiman's armies and unparalleled in the arts of war

These commanders prostrated themselves before Laqa and expressed their readiness to wager their heads and scatter their lives in his service. They reassured him that he could reside in Mount Agate without the least anxiety. Laqa took great comfort from their pledges and decided to make his home in Mount Agate. King Suleiman Amber-Hair threw a feast of celebration in Laqa's honor, and bowed his head in submission to his service.

Amir Hamza had dispatched four fleet-footed and zephyr-paced spies after Laqa the damned when he fled before his victorious armies:

Namian Khaibari
 Tomian Khaibari
 Sarhang Makki
 Abu Tahir the Blood-Spiller

These spies were given instructions to discover where that bird of ill fortune had found a roost, and to gather particulars of the kingdom whose sovereign had offered him refuge. Amir Hamza's spies had disguised themselves and accompanied Laqa, and were present in the court of Suleiman Amber-Hair at that very moment. They listened to the presentations of Suleiman Amber-Hair's commanders and, after collecting all the particulars about the fortress city of Mount Agate and its military strength, hastened out of the fortress as quick as lightning and swift as wind to make their report.

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Amir Hamza was seated with King Saad in the Pavilion of Suleiman. Its panels had been raised to allow them a view of the plains and their pleasant scenery. The spies arrived in great haste before King Saad, with their lips chapped and temples pulsating. They bowed their heads at the designated station, kissed the ground at his feet with lips of servitude and, raising their hands in visiting benedictions and prayers on the king, began:

*“O Majestic and Just King,
 May your excellence last as long as the sun in the heavens
 May you keep goblets company as long as there's another morn
 For as long as the crown of life remains on Khizr's head
 May your fortunes remain as lofty as those of Alexander.”*

The messengers narrated with accuracy and detail all that they had witnessed: “The ill-fated foe Laqa that turned tail before your triumphant armies, that star-crossed, death-bound bear adrift in the desert of darkness, has arrived in Mount

Agate and sought residence there. The king of that land has offered him refuge and words of support.”

King Saad turned his gaze toward his commander-in-chief, Amir Hamza, who ordered the trickster, Amar Ayyar, to send for the camp commander, Aadi, and have the advance camp dispatched toward Mount Agate.

Upon the venerable commander’s orders, the signal of departure was sounded in the triumph-bearing army. The braves decked themselves with arms and armor and prepared to march.

*The cities of Greece and Syria shook to their foundations
With such preparations the advance camp was provisioned*

Platoons, troopers mounted on Arabian horses and countless foot-soldiers began marching toward Mount Agate with majestic mien. The army’s bazaars were also folded up and sent to the destination. Tents, pavilions and other court furniture were loaded up for transportation on camels and mules. The king, with his illustrious commanders, and Amir Hamza, with his peerless tricksters, headed out to lead the armies.

*In the manner the spring gale issues out
To the desert the majestic entourage departed*

After marching for one day and bivouacking for one night, Amir Hamza’s illustrious army arrived in the vicinity of Mount Agate with splendor and set up camp. The king’s pavilion was raised and the camp’s bazaars opened up. Platoons began arriving and occupied the clear plains at strategic locations.

The foes’ wits took flight like birds when they heard the timbals and kettle-drums of Amir Hamza’s army. King Suleiman Amber-Hair gave orders for his soldiers to assemble and shut the city gates. He deployed canons of brass and steel and fortified all the crenelations, ramparts, bulwarks and battlements.

The Disappearance of Prince Badiuz Zaman on a Hunting Expedition, and of Amar Ayyar Going in Search of Him

While the preparations for war were being made, and Amir Hamza was camped opposite the City of Mount Agate, the pleasant air and green plains enticed Amir Hamza’s son,

*Badiuz Zaman the brave, the router of armies
The moon of the constellation of excellence,*

and filled him with a longing to go hunting. He sought Amir Hamza's permission but when he made no reply, Badiuz Zaman went to his mother, Gardiya Bano, and asked her to intercede for him. Gardiya Bano acquiesced and when Amir Hamza entered her chamber, she pleaded on the prince's behalf.

Amir Hamza reluctantly granted his permission, saying, "These plains are the abode of sorcerers. That was the reason why I had not granted my permission earlier, lest the prince should meet some calamity. At your interceding, I am granting him leave on condition that he return the next day and does not stay longer."

Badiuz Zaman accepted the condition. The whole night was spent making preparations for the hunt.

Before long, sun the Heavens' Hunter emerged from his eastern abode carrying the net of rays on his shoulders and started hunting the planetary fixtures on the sky's fields. The world-illuminating sun of the high noon of the auspicious planetary conjunction, the star that lights up the six dimensions of the skies of triumph, to wit, Prince Badiuz Zaman the Magnificent, headed for the plains for hunting.

As the first crack of daylight appeared, the draughts of morning breeze stirred, the tapers flickered, the buds flowered, the love-struck nightingales made their outcries, the peacocks danced in the forests, the birds fluttered away from their nests in search of food and water. Every living being occupied itself with thoughts of the Creator, every heart was filled with the Progenitor's name, and like a veritable preacher the ringdove sang a sermon from the pulpit of the cypress in the name of the True God.

The eminent prince began hunting in the plains with his equipage and retinue, occupying his gaze with the pleasant air of the land and the mountains. Suddenly a fawn appeared near the river bank, cavorting and gambolling like a frolicsome beloved well-versed in coquetry.

*Sporting a brocade sheet on his back
How beautiful and fairy-faced the fawn
His feistiness even a mistress could not attain
A veritable hunter in the meadow where hearts abound*

When Badiuz Zaman beheld that beautiful and comely fawn, he became infatuated and besotted at the very sight and gave orders to his commanders: "Take him alive! Beware, do not let him get away!"

The prince's companions immediately encircled the animal and made a cordon. The fawn pricked his ears and bolted, breaking out of the cordon by leaping off the prince's head. Badiuz Zaman chased him on his horse at a gallop and followed him for many miles until he left behind all his companions and found himself alone. Near to losing the fawn, and unable to take him alive, he drew an arrow from his quiver; notching the arrow and drawing to his ear, he let fly.

The arrow pierced the fawn and it fell. The prince jumped down from his horse and slaughtered him. The moment that fawn died a most dreadful voice was heard that made even the heart of Taurus in the heavens shudder and sent tremors in the seven heavens and the seven seas. It proclaimed,

“O SON OF HAMZA! YOU COMMITTED A TERRIBLE DEED BY KILLING SORCERER GHAZAAL THE FAWN. THIS IS THE LAND OF HOSHRUBA AND IT IS WELL NIGH IMPOSSIBLE TO ESCAPE ITS BOUNDS. ANYTHING THAT MAY HAPPEN NOW WOULD BE TOO LITTLE!”

The prince saw that the entire expanse had become dark with the billowing of sand and dust; a tempest of gales raged mightily. After a moment he lost consciousness and when he opened his eyes he found himself incarcerated in heavy chains. Resting his head on his knees, he became lost in reflection.

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Be it known that the sons of Amar Ayyar are designated tricksters of the courts of Amir Hamza's sons. When a son was born to Hamza from a princess, a son was also born to Amar from the minister's daughter who attended to that princess. Thus Amar's son was deputed as the trickster of Amir Hamza's son.

A trickster named Umayya bin Amar, who was in the service of the prince of happy fortune, arrived on the scene where the fawn was killed and found the plains pitch dark and all the signs of doomsday's horrors manifested there. Umayya saw Badiuz Zaman's headless corpse on the ground, and the beauty that was the moon's envy lying before him all gored.

The trickster held up the corpse in his arms and broke into tears of grief. He rent the collar of his tunic in anguish and, throwing dust on his head, carried the prince's corpse on his horse to his camp. On the way he met the prince's entourage and when they saw that woeful sight, transports of sorrow assailed their hearts too. Weeping and wailing and throwing dust over their heads, all of them presented themselves before Amir Hamza. Witnessing that tragic misfortune, Amir Hamza and his companions gave themselves over to crying and making lamentations. The entire camp and the women's quarters rang alike with sounds of weeping and wail-

ing. Badiuz Zaman's mother, Gardiya Bano, was inconsolable and presented a living picture of grief. She would recite:

*"O solace of my heart and soul
You departed leaving me alone.*

*"You left without giving me news that you leave
Caring not a whit for my loneliness."*

While the whole camp was occupied in mourning, Amir Hamza said to Amar Ayyar, "Harness my steed, Ashqar Demon-Born, and bring him to me so that I may depart in search of the murderer, kill him, and bring away his head." Amar Ayyar replied, "O Prince and Pride of Heavens, I have heard that nobody saw the prince's killer. The expanse had suddenly become pitch black, and when the darkness parted the prince's headless body was found there." Amir Hamza said, "By God there is some mystery in this matter, which the Heavens alone know. Send for the diviners!"

At Amir Hamza's order, the diviners Buzurg Ummid, Siyavush and Daryadil were sent for. They were the sons of Buzurjmehr, the minister of Emperor Naushervan of Persia. Their father had attached his sons to his camp to wait upon him with devotion. The tale of Buzurjmehr and Amir Hamza is recounted in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, and this much would suffice at present to acquaint the reader with their particulars. The diviners were masters in the arts of geomancy and astrology, and able disciples of their father. Amir Hamza seated them with great honor and asked them to find out what had passed with the prince.

The diviners drew the lots of perception on the board of introspection and drawing the horoscope, studied the manifestations of the year, the signs of the zodiac, and the lines of geomancy. After intense study and much contemplation and reflection they raised their heads and said, "O illustrious lord, Prince Badiuz Zaman is alive and safe. However, he is caught in the power of evil sorcerers and lies powerless and helpless in severe internment. The corpse that was brought before you was an effigy made of lentil flour. If you recite the Most Great Name on water and sprinkle it on the corpse, the power of our Creator will be manifested."

As it happened, Prince Badiuz Zaman had strayed into Hoshrubah, the tilism linked to Mount Agate. When the prince entered its frontiers, the Master of the Tilism and Emperor of Hoshrubah, Afrasiyab, learned about it. He ordered one of the tilism's guardians, a sorceress named Sharara Flame-Spirit, to capture the prince. Sharara was ordered to leave the prince's effigy where he was captured so that it

would serve as an example to other transgressors and deter them from entering the tilism.

As Amir Hamza recited the Most Great Name over the water and sprinkled it on the corpse, it returned to its origins – a flour effigy. Amir Hamza bowed his head in gratitude before God and gave thanks to Him who sent the news that his son was alive. He bestowed robes of honor on the diviners and had the effigy thrown away. All the lamentations and weeping in the camp ceased and everyone celebrated the news. Amir Hamza sent for Amar Ayyar and, after conferring much gold and jewels upon him, deputed him to find the whereabouts of the illustrious prince.

Amar Ayyar decorated himself with his occult contraptions and the holy gifts he had been bestowed on Mount Ceylone.

The transcriber states that when the armies of Amir Hamza had arrived to conquer India, Amar had made a pilgrimage to the shrines of the prophets (Peace be upon them) and there Amar fell asleep. In the realm of dreams he had the beatific and marvellous audience of several prophets and they told him that certain devices of trickery had been kept for Amar in the chamber of their shrine. Among them was the zambil, which was a bag within which existed a world comparable to the world on Earth. Upon command, it produced anything that Amar wished at any time, and accommodated anything that Amar kept in it.

Also among them, the cape of invisibility had such properties that when Amar wore it he could see everyone but none could see him. The Net of Ilyas had the miracle that it could carry a thing even if it weighed millions of tons, and make it feel as light as a small stone. Wherever Amar raised Daniyal's Tent and took shelter underneath, none was able to capture him, and anyone who entered it was caught and hung upside down. And when he wore the *dev-jama*, it changed seven colors from green to red to yellow et cetera.

Amar took possession of these items upon receiving the tidings. All this has been mentioned in *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*. Whenever the reader may hear about these objects, he may associate them with that legend. These were the same objects that Amar readied before setting out with great dispatch for the wilderness to search for Prince Badiuz Zaman.

*Setting out in the expanse with such dispatch that birds of prey
Did not even catch the dust he stirred in his wake*

The Meeting of Princess Tasveer and Prince Badiuz Zaman and Their Falling in Love

At the end of his journey, when that Pinnacle of Trickery and the Star of the Skies of Dagger Fighting arrived at the place where Prince Badiuz Zaman had been captured by sorcery, he saw a meadow even more delightful than the garden of paradise.

Admiring the air, Amar carried onwards on his mission. Suddenly, a group of girls appeared on the horizon and Amar hid himself in a bush.

Princess Tasveer

Coming his way was a party of coquettish girls as beautiful and lovely as the moon, and as stately as the sun in the heavens.

*They were of ages between fifteen and sixteen years
Familiar to pangs of adolescence, and nights of desires*

Between them was a princess whose beauty was the moon's envy. She was the gazelle of the desert of beauty and a prancing peacock of the forest of splendor. She walked with her hand placed on the shoulder of one of her attendants,

*Like the rose in a cluster of nightingales, the supreme lord
Like the moon among stars, the lantern of heavens*

and was outfitted in a fine costume and jewelery enchased with gems. Absorbed in the sights of the wilderness, she stepped with a graceful and haughty air.

Amar was regarding the whole scene from his hiding place when one of the princess's attendants felt the call of nature. She sat down to make water at some distance from Amar while her companions continued along their path. Amar reckoned that if he joined the princess's party he might find some clue that would help him locate the prince. He came out of the bush and threw his snare rope at the girl answering the call of nature. When she raised the alarm, Amar stuffed her mouth with a trickster's ball and drugged her unconscious. He tied her to a tree and, putting a mirror before his face, began putting on colored powder and trickster's lotions, changing his face to the girl's likeness. He took off her clothes and dressed himself in them. Leaving her tied there, Amar Ayyar rushed forward to join the party of attendants.

Taking Amar Ayyar for their companion, the girls said, "O Shagufa! You took your time. What else were you doing there besides answering the call of na-

ture?” Amar realized that the girl whose disguise he had put on was called Shagufa. He answered, “Come now, I didn’t take all that long!”

Talking together, they all approached a garden. Amar saw that its gates were open like the yearning eyes of a lover, and the cold wind that wafted there was like the Messiah’s breath. The beauties entered that garden, whose splendor had no equal, and Amar beheld wondrous grounds that were the envy of the garden of paradise.

It was adorned with beautiful promenades and esplanades, paved with jewels instead of bricks. The trees were wrapped in gold cloth. The hedges of henna plants and grapevines decorated the silken grass bed. Like a drunken guest in a wine house, the breeze kept crashing into the ewers of trees. The goblets of flowers brimmed with the wine of freshness and beauty and exhaled a captivating redolence.

Sorceress Sharara Flame-Spirit

In the middle of the garden was a marble platform a hundred yards long and as wide on which a royal carpet was spread. A bejewelled, caparisoned regal throne was placed on it with a canopy made of strung pearls. A finely clad woman in her fifties was sitting on the throne, resting against the pillows with great pomp and majesty. The perfume box, betel box, dry-fruit box, and flowerpots were placed around her on the throne. She rose when the princess, whom Amar had accompanied, approached, and stepped forward with a smile to welcome her. The princess saluted her respectfully. Her attendants also curtsied to the older woman reverently and retreated respectfully in silence afterwards.

The older woman was none other than sorceress Sharara Flame-Spirit, who had put a spell on Prince Badiuz Zaman and imprisoned him. The visiting princess was her niece, Princess Tasveer, the daughter of Empress Heyrat of Hoshrubah. Sharara blessed and kissed Tasveer and seated her on the throne. She ordered accomplished dancers to present themselves and display their talents. A spectacular recital was soon in progress and cups of wine were served.

In the middle of these revelries, Sharara asked Tasveer, “My child, what brought you to these parts? Why did you inconvenience yourself by travelling on foot in the wilderness?” Tasveer answered, “Venerable aunt, reverent to me as my mother! I have heard that you captured one of Hamza’s sons. I am most desirous of seeing a True Believer. Even though they are the creation of our Lord Laqa, they seem so powerful that even our Lord is completely helpless before them. They drive our Lord from land to land and pursue him relentlessly. I have also heard that these people laid hundreds of lands to ruin and destroyed and burned as many til-

isms. I wish to see them to behold the might, power and majesty invested in them by Lord Laqa when he created them.”

Sharara laughed and ordered the prisoner to be brought out so that his plight may be presented to the princess.

A party of sorceresses went away to carry out her orders. In the garden was an enchanted summerhouse where buildings stretched for miles on end. Badiuz Zaman was imprisoned in a chamber inside one building under the vigil of sorceresses. When they received Sharara's orders, the spell was taken off Badiuz Zaman. He was put in chains, fetters, handcuffs and leg-irons. Spiked iron balls were thrust in his armpits and his thighs were secured in steel clasps. Sorceresses led him out by a chain attached to his waist and presented him before Princess Tasveer.

The princess beheld the prince's comely face and his world-adorning beauty. She regarded a handsome and beautiful youth who was a world-illuminating sun of the sky of beauty and a lustrous pearl of the oyster of refinement.

The moment their eyes met, the bow of the prince's eyebrow released the arrow of love, which pierced through the princess's heart, making life a burden for her.

The princess laid her head on the throne and fell unconscious. After much to-do, Sharara restored her to her senses by sprinkling her face with rose-water, essence of musk, and restoratives.

Prince Badiuz Zaman beheld the ravishing beauty regain consciousness and regard him with a longing gaze. The Painter of Creation had surpassed Himself in creating her dazzling beauty and the prince's heart became all aflutter. He felt it nearly break free from the oppressive imprisonment of his body to imprison itself in her locks. That beauty, who was the envy of the House of Mani, was called Tasveer, but the sight of her unparalleled beauty was such that none could behold it without himself becoming transfixed with wonder like a mirror, and still like an image.

The inventive Transcriber of Nature had calligraphed with the pen of beauty the word "HEART-RAVISHING" on the tablet of her face; one more beautiful did not exist in the whole gallery of Creation. The prince became enamoured of her with a thousand souls, and inconsolable in her love.

*Ah desire! Ah desire! the heart cried
I depart! I depart! fortitude answered
The senses began to scatter and disperse
The heart held the standard of frenzy aloft
All sense of shame and dignity began to dissolve
And thus ensued a battle between the mind and heart*

But he got hold of himself and became quiet, realizing that he was already a prisoner in the tilism and if his love were discovered, everyone there would become his enemy and his life worthless.

When Sharara saw Tasveer's suffering, she said to her attendants, "Take away the prisoner! My niece's virgin blood is unfamiliar with oppressive humours! She fainted because she has never seen anyone in such misery and distress before."

The sorceresses led Badiuz Zaman away, locked him up in his chamber, and left him. The prince forgot all the misery of his imprisonment in his new-found love and the memory of the princess began tormenting his grief-stricken heart.

He constantly recited couplets and said to himself, *O Badiuz Zaman! It is impossible that she would ever find you worthy of her attentions; her beauty has intoxicated her with vanity. If you ever found release from this prison, you would surely die a most wretched death in the prison of her love.*

While the prince was undergoing these pangs, Tasveer's longing eyes, too, searched for her flower of excellence. Unable to find what she most ardently desired, she drew an icy sigh from the depths of her pining heart. However, she became quiet as well upon reflection on the disastrous consequences of her passion.

Sharara asked her, "How are you feeling my dear child?" She answered, "Dear aunt, I don't know how to describe to you the sinking feeling in my heart and the dread that seized it at the thought of the prisoner's hardships and harsh imprisonment." Sharara answered, "My child! You are a princess and must not succumb to such anxieties. Felons and estimable folks appear daily before the royalty. Some are hanged or beheaded, while others conferred purses of gold and robes of honor from the royal bounty. Hamza's son is an enemy of sorcerers. He has been imprisoned at the orders of Emperor Afrasiyab, and it's a near impossibility that he will ever be freed. Had it been someone else, I would have gladly released him for your sake and conferred gold and riches on him besides. Now you have my leave to return to your garden. I see that your condition is not improving. Perspiration is covering your forehead still, and idle visions and horrors continue to torment you. If you stay here longer you will remain engrossed in such thoughts. It would suit you better to return to your house, distract your thoughts by conversing with your confidants, and occupy yourself no more with thoughts of the prisoner! Once you go away your spirits will revive like rosebuds breaking into bloom."

Tasveer rose from there and thought, *It was well that my aunt sent me away. Had I stayed here longer, a word of pining or a sigh of longing might have escaped my lips and disclosed my love. Once I am back in my garden, I will cry to my heart's content and unburden it of its sorrow.*

As she bowed from her waist to pay her respects to her aunt before leaving, the beauty, who was the envy of the full moon, became a picture of the crescent. Sharara blessed her and bid her adieu.

Tasveer's attendants, who were promenading in the garden, presented themselves when told of the princess's departure. Amar Ayyar, who was also among them in Shagufa's disguise, thought, *God knows where the princess will go from here. Prince Badiuz Zaman is imprisoned in this place. I must kill this strumpet Sharara and secure the release of my prince!*

The false Shagufa presented herself before Sharara and said humbly, "Your slave girl has become greatly enamoured of this place and this garden. I wish to remain at your feet awhile and not depart today. Besides, I have attained a degree of excellence in music, and now that I have found a connoisseur in you, I desire that you witness my accomplishments. You might find me worthy of your beneficence." Sharara answered, "O Shagufa! Tasveer's house and my house are as one. There is no separation between our households. You may stay here for as long as you wish." Sharara turned toward Tasveer and said, "Tasveer, my child, leave Shagufa here with me!" Tasveer answered, "Very well, aunt!" She left shortly afterwards and the false Shagufa stayed behind.

Princess Tasveer went staggering and stumbling on her way, inconsolable with the pangs of love-induced grief. She kept saying to herself, *Ah, what a misfortune that I fell in love with the one who has sworn enmity to my life and my faith, as he is a slayer of sorcerers! His release from the prison is near impossible. Alas, alas, alas! He will lose his life for nothing!* She was occupied with these reflections when suddenly the real Shagufa arrived before her, all naked and in tears. Princess Tasveer wondered what had happened to her in the time that she had been left with Sharara, and who had stripped her of her clothes.

Shagufa threw herself at the princess's feet, and said, "My princess, I was accompanying you when I stopped along the way to answer the call of nature. A man appeared from the bushes all of a sudden and God knows what he did to me that I lost consciousness. He stripped me and left me tied to a tree. When I came to, I implored a passer-by to help me, and after freeing myself, I rushed before you. I consider myself fortunate that I again behold the face of Your Honor."

The princess marvelled at the story, and thought, *I should not breathe even a word of this to anyone. Perhaps one of Prince Badiuz Zaman's friends put on Shagufa's disguise and stayed behind to find some way for securing his release. If I talk about it, Sharara will hear of it and that poor soul will also be captured.*

In her love for the prince, Tasveer did not show any consideration even for her own aunt. She sent for her attendants, had a change of clothes brought for Shagufa, and said to everyone, "Look at this wanton girl! She did not want me to learn

what she had in mind, so she took leave to stay behind at my aunt's house. Then she stole away God knows where so that even her clothes were stripped away." Shagufa protested and said, "Pray believe me, I speak the truth!" The princess replied, "Quiet, you liar! I will never believe a word you say! I swear by Lord Sameri that if you speak again I will have you punished most severely!" After threatening Shagufa against opening her mouth about the incident or spreading the news of what had passed with her, the princess diverted herself with the sights of her garden. She put her hopes in the Omnipotent Causer of Causes to create a way for the prince's release.

When Tasveer stepped into her garden, she found it a veritable thorn in the absence of her nightingale-like beloved. She could find neither peace nor rest. Her heart was marked by the prince's love like the tulip; her gaze awaited the prince's sight like the narcissus; and, with longing in her heart, she waited for the noble prince, all delicate and fragile like the spikenard.

(To be continued)

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Notes

¹ We will publish the next installment of Musharraf Farooqi's translation in our next issue.