
The Reflection of Kashan and Vernacular Lore in the Poetry of Muhammad Bāqir Khurda-yi Kāshānī

Seyed Mohammad Farid Rastgu Far

Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, University of Kashan. Kashan. Iran. (corresponding author). Email: rastgufarid@kashanu.ac.ir

Seyed Mohammad Rastgu

Emeritus Professor, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, University of Kashan. Kashan. Iran. Email: rastgoo14@yahoo.com

Received: 22/05/2025

Accepted: 09/09/2025

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Language serves as the most critical repository for the preservation, vitality, and intergenerational transmission of culture. Within this framework, poets, as the products of their respective eras, play a pivotal role in documenting customs, traditions, beliefs, and linguistic idioms. The Safavid era, characterized by dynamic literary exchanges between Iran and India as the emergence of the *Sabk-i Hindī* (the Indian Style) demonstrated, represents a major locus for the integration of colloquial speech into standard canonical poetry. Muḥammad Bāqir Khurda-yi Kāshānī (d. 1038 AH / 1628 CE) was an eminent poet and calligrapher of this period who migrated to India during his youth and attained a distinguished position at the court of Ibrāhīm ‘Ādil Shāh. Despite his permanent residency in India, the memory of his birthplace (Kashan) and its vernacular culture remained deeply embedded in his psyche and literary expression. The primary objective of this study is to elucidate how regional, geographical, and colloquial elements of Kashan are reflected in the unedited manuscript of Bāqir Khurda’s *Dīwān* (collected poems).

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. Given that multiple manuscripts are open to attribution to the *Dīwān* of "Bāqir," this research first engaged in rigorous textual criticism to differentiate the codices. It demonstrates that certain manuscripts (such as Manuscript No. 6555 in the Razavi Library) belong to Bāqir Astarābādī rather than Bāqir Khurda. The textual evidence extracted for this paper is strictly based on the authentic manuscripts of Bāqir Khurda's *Dīwān*, specifically the Asafiya and Aligarh codices. Data collection was conducted through a meticulous, word-by-word textual extraction from the *Dīwān*, followed by a historical-comparative analysis utilizing geographical texts and authoritative vernacular lexicons such as Āṭīf’s compendium of Kashani idioms and proverbs.

Findings

The textual analysis of Bāqir Khurda’s *Dīwān* revealed that the representation of the poet’s birthplace was categorized into two primary axes: first, toponyms and

historical-geographical landmarks of Kashan; second, its environs and the deployment of Kashani vernacular vocabulary, idioms, and metaphors.

Regarding the first axis, Bāqir Khurda, while in diaspora in India, extolled Kashan through a deeply nostalgic and melancholic lens, describing it as “an unprovisioned corner of Paradise.” He also referenced well-known regional environmental hazards such as the infamous scorpions of Kashan. The most significant cultural-geographical finding of this study was the poet’s explicit mention of three specific toponyms: “Fīn”—depicted as a verdant and flourishing promenade during the spring season. The Ābyārān waterfall (*Ābshār-i Ābyārān*)—identified as the probable source of the Fīn spring and the historical site for municipal water distribution. Dasht-i Afrūz—currently serves as a cemetery in Kashan—was proved through Bāqir Khurda’s poetic evidence—cross-referenced with ancient texts such as the 6th-century AH *qaṣīda* of Sayyid Abū al-Riḍā Rāwandī and accounts from the *Tārīkh-i Qum* regarding the “Shiqq of Abrūz”—to be formerly a historically expansive plain, a popular recreational pasture, and a gathering place for the youth. The *Mazār-i Shīkhān*—formerly a cemetery—became subsequently expanded and eventually lent its funerary association to the entire plain. Samsārkhān, which was mentioned in the elegy for Sanjar, likely refers to a caravanserai within the ancient bazaar of Kashan (*Sarāy-i Samsārān*) that served as a venue for communal mourning rituals.

In regard to second axis, the deployment of Kashani vernacular vocabulary, idioms, and metaphors, Bāqir Khurda, in order to adhere to classical poetic meters (*‘arūd*) and standard literary structures, occasionally subjected colloquial words to literary modification (e.g., transforming the dialectal *ba-ra-darmun* into the standard *bahr-i darmān*); however, he preserved numerous dialectal elements intact for instance, technical and colloquial vocabularies. He deliberately utilized dialectal terms such as *bāsh* (look/see), *band shudan* (to become stuck/entangled), *bar u rū* (facial beauty/comeliness), *chashta-khūr* (habituated to a specific privilege or vice), *dargashta* (ruined/perverted), and *wākashīdan*. historical validation of the “Atal Matal” nursery rhyme was a specific distich by Bāqir Khurda that contained the phonetic phrase “*Atattal-tutaltal*.” Alongside, a mystical treatise by his contemporary fellow-townsmen, Fayḍ Kāshānī, this verse stands as the earliest extant textual evidence confirming the currency of the traditional Iranian children’s rhyme “*Atal Matal Tutula*” in Kashan during the 16th and 17th centuries CE.

In respect to colloquial metaphors and proverbs, the living idioms from Kashani folklore were integrated: including *Ātash ba gūr-i kasī andākhtan* (“casting fire into someone’s grave”; meaning to bring ruin upon someone’s memory or lineage); *Az ‘umr pashīmān kardan* (“making one regret one’s life”); *Bādimjān-i bad āfat nadārad* (“bad eggplants are immune to blight”; reflecting resilience or the persistence of the wicked); *Bā ṭanāb-i kasī ba chāh raftan* (“descending into a well with someone else’s rope”; denoting blind, detrimental reliance on others); *Puf-i kāsagarī* (“the potter’s puff”; referring to a critical, closely guarded trade secret). *Jā ī namīnīshīnad kih āb ba zīrish biravad* (“never sitting where water can seep underneath him”; denoting extreme caution and calculation); *Khāna-raushanī kardan* (“brightening the house”; referring to the final, terminal burst of energy exhibited by a dying patient before death).

Conclusion

This investigation into the *Dīwān* of Muḥammad Bāqir Khurda-yi Kāshānī demonstrated that his displacement from his homeland and protracted residency within the literary milieus of India did not sever his emotional and linguistic ties to his birthplace. His poetry served as a faithful mirror of Safavid-era geography and the folklore of Kashan. Re-evaluating his *Dīwān* not only clarified his transitional, bridge-like role in the evolution of the Indian Style (*Sabk-i Hindī*) but also yielded invaluable data for researchers concerning the historical geography of the region (e.g., the functional transition of Dasht-i Afrūz from a pasture to a necropolis) and the antiquity of Iranian folkloric texts (dating the "*Atal Matal*" rhyme back to the Safavid period).

Keywords: Kashan, Muhammad-Baqir Khordeh, popular culture, popular expressions, Dasht-Afroz, Atal-Matal