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A Research Compendium

Qudsiyah Ihtishāmī

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Yaghoubi is a key contributor to the Encyclopedia of Hafez and Hafez Studies (Nakhestan Parsi Publishing, 2018), where he authored approximately 25 entries under the leadership of Dr. Abdullah Jassbi and the editorial supervision of Baha al-Din Khorramshahi. His contributions include entries on "Hafez's Ethics," "Hafez's Worldview," "Philosophy in the Divan of Hafez," "Hafez and Goethe," and "Aesthetics of Hafez."

Qudsiyah Ihtishāmī, born Habībah Baygum (AH 1320–1402/1288–1360/1902–1981), was the daughter of a certain ‘Alī -Muhammad. While information about her early life and family remains scarce, her husband, ‘Alī Akbar Ihtishāmī, has a more extensively documented biography. ‘Alī Akbar Ihtishāmī was born on AH Sha‘bān 18, 1291/Mihr 15, 1253/October 7, 1874 in Shiraz, where his father, Asad‘allāh Bayg, held a military position under of the governor of Fars. Subsequently, his father moved to Isfahan, settling in Khurāsān. ‘Alī-Akbar pursued his education at the Kāsah‘garān School before entering the service of Zill al-Sultān, the governor of Isfahan. He later acquired expertise in dentistry, obtaining certification from the Ministry of Fine Arts (Vizārat-i Sanāy-i-i Mustazrafah). Renowned for his poetic prowess, ‘Alī-Akbar married Qudsiyah when she was fifteen years old.¹ Their union endured until his passing on Bahman 26, 1331/February 15, 1953.²

‘Alī-Akbar’s surviving notes provide a brief but insightful mention of Qudsiyah: “Her birth name is Habībah-Bīgum, and she was born in AH 1320/1902 in Isfahan. She is a woman of remarkable virtue, distinguished by refined manners and a sense of perfection. Due to her occasional forays into poetry, she became widely known by the name Qudsiyah.” Her name is officially recorded as Qudsiyah on her birth certificate. She received an education in traditional sciences, including jurisprudence (fiqh), the science of prophetic traditions and accounts

(hadith va akhbār), while also being well-versed in the scientific knowledge of her time.³

While it seems that Qudsiyah did not have a formal occupation, she engaged in various charitable activities and helped the poor. She also established a free school at her residence to educate children.⁴ The *Tazkirah-yi al-shu'arā-yi mu'āsir-i Isfahān* (The anthology of contemporary poets of Isfahan) recognizes Qudsiyah among the “contemporary female poets.”⁵ Her poems appeared in local newspapers, including *Ulyā'-yi Isfahān*, *Rāh-i Nijāt*, and *Sharāfat-i Insān*, with particular prominence in *Ir-fān* and *Akhgar*, which were the most influential newspapers in Isfahan during Reza Shah Pahlavi's reign.⁶ These newspapers were in circulation between Ābān 1307/November 1928 and Day 1321/January 1943. The publication of Qudsiyah's poems in various periodicals suggests that she was far from an unknown poet in her time. At the age of nineteen, when the first issue of *Akhgar* was released, and thirty-three when its final issue published, she lived through a period marked by significant political and social events in contemporary Iran. These events, such as the 1919 Agreement and the premiership of Hasan Vusūq al-Dawlah, that occurred during her adolescence, shaped her poetic voice. Her works, primarily focused on the social and political conditions of her country, reflect her responses to these events. This suggests that she began composing poetry at an early age. It is therefore unsurprising that, at just nineteen years of age, when *Akhgar* was first published, she had already established enough of a reputation to have her poetry featured in this publication, as well as in other prominent newspapers in Isfahan.

Further evidence of her acclaim comes from a poem written in her honor by Mustafā Qulī Kurūnī. Kurūnī (AH 1293–1353/1876–1934), who wrote under the pen name Sīnā, was a prominent poet of his time. His collection of poems was lithographed in AH 1324/1906. He is frequently mentioned in literary anthologies. The *Tazkirah-yi shu'arā-yi Najaf'ābād* (The

¹Qudsiyah Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, ed. Husayn Ihtishāmī (Isfahan: Naqsh-i Nigīn, 1392/2013), 12.

²Muslih al-Dīn Mahdāvī, 'Alām-i Isfahān (Isfahan: Sāzmān-i Farhangī-yi Taf-rīhī-yi Shahrdārī-yi Isfahān, 1387/2008), 1:140.

³“Majmū'ah-yi farhangī-yi mazhabī-yi Takht-i Fūlād,” in *Dānish'nāmah-yi Takht-i Fūlād-i Isfahān*, ed. Asghar Muntazir al-Qā'im (Isfahan: Sāzmān-i Farhangī-yi Taf-rīhī-yi Shahrdārī-yi Isfahān, 1393/2010), 1:139.

⁴Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 13.

⁵Muslih al-Dīn Mahdāvī, *Tazkirah-yi shu'arā-yi mu'āsir-i Isfahān* (Isfahan: Kitāb'furūshī-i Ta'yīd, 1334/1955), 23.

⁶Abd al-Mahdī Rajā'ī, *Isfahān az nigāh-i Akhgar* (Isfahan: Sāzmān-i Farhangī-yi Taf-rīhī-yi Shahrdārī-yi Isfahān, 1393/2014), 7.

⁷Muhammad 'Alī Sultānī
Najaf'ābādī, *Tazkirah-yi
shu'arā-yi Najaf'ābād* (Isfahan:
Mahdī Akramiyān (Ashk),
1354/1975), 179.

⁸Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
18.

⁹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
25.

anthology of the poets of Najaf'ābād) describes him as “[...] the lover with disheveled hair, and one of the renowned poets of Isfahan.”⁷ Below is an excerpt from his poem, which not only praises Qudsiyah but also honors 'Alī-Akbar Ihtishāmī:

He is of noble birth, his lineage grand and true,

I stand firm in every word I speak.

His noble blood traces back to Persian kings,

His efforts alone confirm the truth of his claim.

Sweet is the spirit-reviving speech of Qudsiyah,

Infused with the Holy Spirit's breath, it holds the magic of expression.

He saw in her loyalty, affection, and kindness,

From the depths of his heart, Sīnā composed this verse.⁸

Further insights into Qudsiyah's life can be derived from her own poems, rather than from external sources, anthologies, or even in the biographical account provided in the introduction to her collection of poems. In an ode (*qasīdah*) titled “*Sipās-i Yazdān*” (Gratitude to God), she explicitly references the number of her children, five daughters and three sons, saying: “The five daughters and three sons are the offspring of Qudsiyah.”⁹ Additionally, in her poems, she reveals that she was orphaned at the age of four and raised by a stepfather, enduring hardship under his mistreatment.

At four years old, my father left this world,

It felt as if my soul was scorched, beyond measure,



More bitter than the sorrow of losing a father was the anger of
a stepfather

¹⁰Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
122.

Like Noah's flood, its waves crashing relentlessly over my head.

¹¹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
131.

Each night, dry bread was my only fare, so meager and bare,

While tears flooded my pillow, soaking it through.

Whenever I saw him in my dreams,

A heavy weight would settle upon me, burdened by that dreadful
fate.¹⁰

Qudsiyah lost her mother in early Farvardīn 1330/March 1951.
Later, in the following winter, she also lost her husband, and in
1349/1970, one of her three sons also passed away. The following
verses reflect these profound losses:

It was the year three hundred and thirty of the Solar Hijri calendar,

Add a thousand to that, when my moon set,

It was the thirtieth of Bahman when my companion departed
from the gathering,

Responding to the call, he hastened toward the Divine.

In the third decade of Bahman, in the year forty-nine,

In life, it was the hardest of times, the most sorrowful,

My son, Farzān, departed to meet the Day of Judgment,

The bond between father and son grew purer than ever.¹¹

¹²Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 169.

Qudsiyah composed two more couplets in mourning for her son and husband, referencing the month of their passing:

In the month of Bahman, my son lies beneath the earth,

My dear son rests, beside his father, in peace.

When will the grim moon of Bahman fade from my thoughts?

The sorrow of death fills my heart with grief.¹²

An interesting aspect of Qudsiyah's life is that it unfolded alongside significant events in modern Iranian history, to which she reacted. Her childhood and adolescence coincided with the decline of the Qajar dynasty and the ascent of Rizā Khān. Even until her passing in 1360/1981, amid the Iran-Iraq War, her poems reflect her ongoing engagement with political and social issues of her time.

Key Events of the Qudsiyah's Lifetime and Their Influence on Her Poetry

An examination of the major historical events of Qudsiyah's lifetime, particularly those reflected in her poetry, is essential for understanding the broader context of her era. It also illuminates how societal developments shaped her views on politics, human nature, history, and her overall worldview. This is why scholars emphasize the importance of exploring the historical and social conditions that influenced poets like Sa'dī and Hāfiz, shedding light on how these factors shaped their perspectives. Just as we gain insights into Hāfiz's concerns reflected in his poetry, such as the conquest of Shiraz by Amīr Mubārīz al-Dīn (AH 718–759/1301–1363) and his strict religiosity, an examination of Qudsiyah's poetry also offers valuable understanding of her stance on the socio-political issues of her time.

This approach is equally applicable to contemporary poets. For



instance, the events surrounding Muhammad Mas'ūd (1280–1326/1901–1948), which are discussed below, provide insights into the issue of freedom of expression and the press during the period. Without a brief overview of Muhammad Mas'ūd's activities and subsequent assassination, we would fail to grasp the critical socio-political challenges of the time, including the concerns central to Qudsiyah's life. Among these was her continual focus on national unity in opposition to secessionist or separatist movements, which emerged from the turbulent conditions of the time. We also learn about Qudsiyah's patriotic fervor, spurred by foreign interventions, a foreign-backed coup, and various other threats to the country's integrity.

This section explores four key events, along with Qudsiyah's reflections on them. All these events are among the most significant occurrences in Iran's contemporary history. These events, which captured the attention of both the public and the intellectual elite, include the 1297/1919 Agreement, the case of Ja'far Pīshahvarī, the Azerbaijan Crisis of 1325/1946, and the assassinations of Muhammad Mas'ūd in 1326/1948 and General Afshār'tūs in 1331/1953.

The earliest event mentioned in Qudsiyah's collection of poems is the story of Hasan Vusūq al-Dawlah and the 1297/1919 Agreement. Vusūq al-Dawlah (1247–1329/1868–1951), son of Ibrāhīm Khān Mu'tamid al-Saltanah, and elder brother of Ahmad Qavām al-Saltanah, was a prominent political figure in Iran. He was a member of the first Iranian parliament, the inaugural term of the National Consultative Assembly in 1284/1906. However, after Muhammad 'Alī Shah's bombardment of the parliament in 1287/1908, he lost his position.¹³ Following the capture of Tehran in 1287/1909 and the deposition of Muhammad 'Alī Shah, a temporary council of thirty members was established to manage the country, with Vusūq selected as its head. This council ordered the execution of Shaykh Fazl'allāh Nūrī in the same year.¹⁴ Later, Vusūq held numerous key positions, including twice as prime minister, five times as minister of justice,

¹³Mustafā Alamūti, *Bāzīgarān-i siyāsī az mashrūtiyat tā sāl-i 1357* (London: Bakā, 1995), 1:194.

¹⁴Mustafā Alamūti, *Bāzīgarān-i siyāsī az mashrūtiyat tā sāl-i 1357* (London: Bakā, 1995), 1:194.

¹⁵Bāqirī, *Sharh-i hāl-i rjāl-i siyāsī va nizāmī-i Irān*, 3:1706.

¹⁵Muhammad-Taqī Bahār, *Tārīkh-i mukhtasar-i ahzāb-i siyāsī* (3rd repr., ed. Tehran: Shirkat-i Sāhamī-i Kitāb'hā-yi Jībī, 1357/1979), 1:34.

eight times as foreign minister, five times as interior minister, twice as finance minister, and once as minister of education. Vusūq also composed a collection of poems.¹⁵ The event that brought both disgrace and fame to Vusūq was the 1297/1919 Agreement with Britain, which sparked strong opposition both domestically and internationally. The agreement was never sent to parliament for approval and was eventually nullified by the government of Sayyid Ziyā' al-Dīn Tabātabā'ī in 1299/1921.

Malik al-Shu'arā Bahār (1265–1330/1886–1951), the poet-lau-
reate, politician, and historian, reflects on the dire circumstanc-
es in Iran during this period and attempts to convey the sense
of despair that led the government to assent to the 1297/1919
agreement. World War I had just ended, with the outcome fa-
voring the Allies. The British government had deployed forces
from India to Khorasan and from Mesopotamia to Hamadan,
established the South Persia Rifles in the southern region, and
stockpiled ammunition in preparation for an advance from
Khorasan toward Bandar Anzali on the Caspian Sea. At the
same time, the Bolshevik presence in northern Iran added to the
growing array of threats. In this fraught context, the 1297/1919
Agreement was signed in December 1297/1919 between the
Qajar government and the British government. The agreement
sought to place Iran's finances, administration, and military un-
der the supervision of British advisors and commanders.¹⁶

At the time, the agreement garnered both support and oppo-
sition, and the debate over whether it ultimately benefited or
harmed Iran continues to this day. One perspective that views
the agreement as detrimental to Iran is offered by Jack Straw, the
former British foreign secretary. In his book *The English Job:
Understanding Iran and Why It Distrusts Britain* (2019), which
explores Anglo-Iranian relations, he asserts in this regard:

However prosaic the individual terms of this agreement might
have seemed, its intention was to make Iran a British protec-
torate in all but name. The UK would effectively control its fi-



nances, its public administration and its military, and have first refusal on potentially lucrative civil engineering projects for road and rail.¹⁷

At that time, Iranian public opinion was unanimously opposed to this treaty, with resistance against the presence of British troops in Iran becoming increasingly overt and intense. Sayyid Hasan Mudarris was the standard-bearer of this movement.¹⁸ Given this public sentiment, it is not surprising that Qudsiyah, who was consistently preoccupied with societal and political issues, as evidenced by her collection of poems, responded to this treaty. She composed an ode (qasīdah) titled “Nang-i Vusūq al-Dawlah” (The disgrace of Vusūq al-Dawlah):

War and fratricide have risen once more,
The state of Iran lies shattered, more broken than my heart.
Where is national unity? Tell me, for our motherland,
Now, weakened, her chest trembles with mournful cries.
Intrigues weave together, seeking to erase our homeland,
And my tears, an endless torrent, fall without cease.
Vusūq al-Dawlah, the traitor, has sold our land,
His treaty is worse than that of Gulistān.
I have become as if buried alive for this country,
A shroud is fitting for me, as the garment is a prison.
I swear by the blood of our homeland’s pure young martyrs,
That the soil of Iran belongs to Iran alone.¹⁹

¹⁷Jack Straw, *The English Job: Understanding Iran and Why It Distrusts Britain* (London: Biteback, 2019), 84.

¹⁸Bahār, *Tārīkh-i mukhtasar-i ahzāb-i siyāsī*, 50.

¹⁹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 97–98.

²⁰Touraj Atabaki, *Āzarbāy-jān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, trans. Muhammad-Karīm Ishrāq (Tehran: Tūs, 1377/1997), 128; This is a Persian translation of *Azerbaijan: A Political History* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 1993).

²¹Atabaki, *Āzarbāy-jān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 129–30.

²²Atabaki, *Āzarbāy-jān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 117–18.

Another significant event of contemporary Iranian history that elicited a response from Qudsiyah was the case of Ja'far Pīshahvarī and the Azerbaijan Democratic Party. Mīr Ja'far Pīshahvarī (1272–1326/1892–1947), born Javādzādah Khalkhālī in Khalkhāl, moved to Baku in 1284/1906, and began his journalistic career in 1296/1917. His first editorial was published in the Azeri newspaper *Āchīq-Sūz* in Baku.²⁰ Upon returning to Iran, Pīshahvarī became involved in communist party activities. At the height of the Jangal Movement in 1299/1920, the Jangalī forces established a republic in Gilan, which became known as the Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran. Pīshahvarī served as the Commissar of Foreign Affairs in its first cabinet, with Kūchak Khān as the High Commissioner. In the second cabinet, formed after a coup against Kūchak Khan, Pīshahvarī assumed the role of Commissar of Internal Affairs. He also published *Rūznāmah-yi Kumūnīst* (Communist newspaper) in Rasht. When the Jangal Movement faced a crisis, Pīshahvarī left Iran and participated in the Third World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow in 1300/1921 as the representative of the Tabriz branch of the Iranian Communist Party.

Pīshahvarī returned to Tehran in 1300/1921 and published *Haqīqat* (Truth), the newspaper of the Labor Union movement. In 1309/1931, he was arrested and imprisoned for ten years. In 1319/1941, he was exiled to Kashan but returned to Tehran a year later and published the *Āzhīr* newspaper.²¹ By 1324/1945, Pīshahvarī had concluded that a strong, comprehensive movement transcending the Tūdah Party's program and class divisions was necessary in Azerbaijan. This movement needed to have a national character and unity, capable of mobilizing the Azerbaijanis based on unifying elements such as language and ethnicity. As a result, he succeeded in dissolving Azerbaijan's Tūdah Party and integrating its members into the Azerbaijan Democratic Party.²²

On Ābān 17, 1324/November 8, 1945, the central committee of the Democratic Party held its inaugural political meeting and



announced in its official newspaper, Azerbaijan, that the next step would be establishing an autonomous government. Shortly after, the Azerbaijan Democratic Party organized paramilitary groups known as Fadā'iyān (literally, “those who devote or sacrifice themselves”). In Āzar/December of the same year, these armed groups launched attacks on the western and northwestern regions of Azerbaijan. The first cities to fall to the Fadā'iyān were Marāghah, Marand, Miyānah, Sarāb, and Ardabīl. These victories were made possible through covert support from the Soviet army.²³ The Soviets obstructed the central government's efforts to supply its military garrisons while providing arms to the Fadā'iyān. The Soviet action effectively violated the Tripartite Treaty of 1320/1942, which stipulated non-interference in Iran's internal affairs.

On Ābān 29, 1324/November 20, 1945, the National Assembly of Azerbaijan was formed, and two days later, it was renamed to the Constitutional Assembly.²⁴ On Āzar 21, 1324/December 12, 1945, the National Assembly of Azerbaijan was officially inaugurated, and Pīshahvarī was appointed as Prime Minister.²⁵ The Democrats sought to create an independent and autonomous government in Azerbaijan, one that would oversee all regional affairs and control the military forces stationed there, with the central government only intervening in foreign relations. The government of Ahmad Qavām (1256-1334/1873-1955), the then Prime Minister of Iran (1325–1326/1946–1947), and the representatives of Azerbaijan reached a compromise on Khurdād ²⁶, 1325/June 13, 1946.²⁶ Qavām's government sought to find a solution to end Azerbaijan's autonomy but was unable to do so due to Iran's prevailing weaknesses and instabilities. Consequently, it was forced to reach an agreement with the Democratic Party. On Ābān 20, 1325/November 11, 1946, the Azerbaijan Provincial Assembly, which had previously referred to itself as the National Assembly, approved a verbal agreement with Tehran to return Zanjān to the central government's jurisdiction.

²³Atabaki, *Āzarbāyjān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 122–23.

²⁴Atabaki, *Āzarbāyjān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 124.

²⁵Atabaki, *Āzarbāyjān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 142.

²⁶Atabaki, *Āzarbāyjān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 165–67.

²⁷Atabaki, *Āzarbāyjān dar Īrān-i mu'āsir*, 130, 178–83.

²⁸Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 99.

On Āzar 2, 1325/November 23, 1946, as the Fadā'iyān were evacuating Zanjān, the central government's army suddenly attacked the remaining forces and seized all administrative offices. Qavām decided to deploy forces to Azerbaijan under the pretext of ensuring election security, which Pīshahvarī opposed. Qavām stood firm in his decision, and on Āzar 16, 1325/December 7, 1946, Pīshahvarī declared war on the central government. Qavām issued an attack order on Āzar 19/December 10, and ultimately the leaders of the Democratic Party voted for complete surrender in their meeting. As a result, on Āzar 25, 1325/December 16, 1946, the Democratic Party's rule over Azerbaijan came to an end, and Pīshahvarī fled to Soviet Azerbaijan, where he died a year later, under circumstances that remain a subject of debate.²⁷ As a result, Azerbaijan was once again brought under the central government's control.

In response to the events surrounding Pīshahvarī and his party, Qudsiyah composed a poem that reflected her perspective on the situation:

There is naught but the rule of peace in our thoughts,

How dare Pīshahvarī seek to sever our roots?

In the West and Tabriz, he spent his time in deception,

In vain, the Democratic Party and our defenders he betrayed.

Yet with the resolve of the brave and the management of the battle,

Evil was expelled from the homeland, our eternal solace restored.

My country has been the burial ground for aggressors,

No foe can withstand the edge of our axe.²⁸



Among the notable events that prompted Qudsiyah to compose poetry, and which she referenced multiple times in her collection of poems when defending the freedom of expression and criticizing its suppression, was the assassination of Muhammad Mas'ūd (1280–1326/1905–1948). Born in Qum to Mīrzā 'Abd'allāh, Mas'ūd, who wrote under the pseudonym of M. Dihātī, was an Iranian journalist, writer, and a supporter of the Constitutional Revolution. He moved to Tehran in 1311/1932, where he published his first literary masterpiece, *Tafrihāt-i shab* (Nocturnal amusements). In 1314/1935, on the recommendation of the writer and translator Muhammad 'Alī Jamālzādah (1270–1376/1892–1997) and through the mediation of the politician and jurist 'Alī Akbar Dāvar (1264–1315/1885–1937), Mas'ūd traveled to Brussels to study journalism. He obtained his master's degree in this field in 1317/1938.

Among Mas'ūd's most notable characteristics were his outspokenness, professional dedication and disdain for flattery. In a letter dated Bahman 29, 1315/February 18, 1937, Jamālzādah wrote to him: "Your nature is incompatible with flattery or sycophancy, which is commendable. While this may lead to persistent challenges and, throughout your life, provoke complaints from others, it ultimately reflects your independence of spirit. Upon your passing, this quality is likely to be regarded as one of your moral virtues."²⁹ Upon returning to Iran in early 1321/1942, Mas'ūd obtained the license for the newspaper *Mard-i Imrūz* (Today's man), which released its first issue on Murdād 29, 1321/August 20, 1942.³⁰ His writings focused on combating corruption, theft, espionage, and dictatorship. According to Nasr'allāh Shīftah, the editor-in-chief of his newspaper, Mas'ūd demonstrated such courage, bravery, and audacity in this cause that he ultimately gave his life for it.³¹ *Mard-i Imrūz*, which was suspended more than fifty times, was one of the most widely circulated newspapers of its time. The first suspension was due to its protest against the National Bank's increase in banknote printing. Its final issue was published on Bahman 24, 1326/February 14, 1948.

²⁹Nasrallāh Shīftah, *Zindagī'nāmah va mubārizāt-i siyāsī-i Muhammad Mas'ūd* (Tehran: Āftāb-i Haqīqat, 1363/1984), 7–9.

³⁰Shīftah, *Zindagī'nāmah va mubārizāt-i siyāsī-i Muhammad Mas'ūd*, 14.

³¹Shīftah, *Zindagī'nāmah va mubārizāt-i siyāsī-i Muhammad Mas'ūd*, 28.

³²Shīftah, *Zindagī-nāmah va mubārizāt-i siyāsī-i Muhammad Mas'ūd*, 51–66.

³³Shīftah, *Zindagī-nāmah va mubārizāt-i siyāsī-i Muhammad Mas'ūd*, 395.

Mas'ūd's newspaper was not affiliated with any specific party or group, and its critical stance often employed sharp language. As it criticized all political movements and ideologies from an independent position, it garnered many enemies and few allies. Mas'ūd, concerned that capitalists and influential figures might attempt to influence his work, refrained from associating with them.³² He was assassinated on the night of Bahman 23, 1326/February 11, 1948. Ten years later, Khusraw Rūzbah, a member of the Tūdah Party, revealed that he and the Party had orchestrated and carried out Mas'ūd's assassination.³³

In an eighteen-verse ode (*qasīdah*) dedicated to Muhammad Mas'ūd, Qudsiyah acknowledges Mas'ūd's outspokenness and bravery in his struggles, describing him as truthful and fearless. To describe Mas'ūd, she uses expressions that are novel and not seen in the poetry of traditional poets. She refers to Mas'ūd as the "martyr of critique" and the "unrivaled champion of the press," capturing both his role as a fearless critic and his prominence in journalism:

A great man passed away in this land,

Where peace is absent, and only crime holds sway.

His loss sowed sorrow in the hearts of his kin,

Tell the foe: the truthful man knows no sin.

He fell, like Farrukhī and 'Ishqī before,

A martyr to truth, from which no wrong can pour.

Sleep in peace, Mas'ūd, in your final rest,

No heart is darker than that of your killer.

Sleep soundly, you who faced your fate,



For no justice will come to your killer's state.

³⁴Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 106–7.

Sleep forever, O master of the press,

³⁵Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 144.

Before your pen, none held power or success.

³⁶Hamīd Sayfzādah, *Hāfizah-yi tārikhī: Afshār'tūs kih būd va chi'gūnah kushtah shud* (Tehran: Mū'allif, 1373/1994), 21–22.

After your death, O pure-hearted writer of truth,

No heart remains untouched, with no flame or sigh.³⁴

Qudsiyah also composed another couplet for Mas'ūd, placing his status alongside that of Farrukhī Yazdī, the poet and journalist (1268–1318/1889–1939), and Mīrzādah 'Ishqī, the poet and political writer (1273–1303/1894–1924):

No sorrow that Farrukhī's mouth was sealed,

Or that 'Ishqī, in despair, was consumed by grief.

Or that Mas'ūd's brain became the target of an arrow,

For the names of the martyrs were lit like a flame.³⁵

Another tragic event commemorated in Qudsiyah's collection of poems with an ode in sixteen verses is the murder of General Mahmūd Afshār'tūs (1285–1332/1907–1953), one of the most significant and shocking events in Iran's contemporary history. Afshār'tūs, born to Husayn Khān Shibl al-Saltanah in 1285/1907 in Tehran, was from a Qajar family. In 1331/1952, he was appointed Chief of the National Police by Prime Minister Muhammad Musaddiq. In Farvardīn 1332/April 1953, he mysteriously disappeared on Khānqāh Street, and his body was discovered two weeks later in the Lashkarak mountains.³⁶ He was a staunch supporter of Musaddiq's government, and the trust Musaddiq had in him led to his appointment to such a high position. Musaddiq's government, however, faced significant opposition from various factions seeking to undermine it. Even before the

³⁷Husayn-Qulī Sarrīshah, *Khātirāt-i man: Yād'dāsh't'hā-yi dawrah-yi 1310-1334* (Tehran: Mū'allif, 1367/1988), 31–32.

³⁸Muhammad Turkamān, *Ittilā'āfī darbārah-yi tashannuj'hā va dargīrī'hā-yi khiyābānī va tawta'ah'hā dar dawrān-i hukūmat-i duktur Musaddiq, Daft-ar-i Panjum: Asnādī pīrāmūn-i tawta'ah-yi rubūdān va qatl-i sarlashkar Afshār'tūs* (Tehran: Rasā, 1363/1984), 124.

1332/1953 coup, they had attempted to assassinate Musaddiq once, but Afshār'tūs had managed to thwart the plot. This made Afshār'tūs a target for Musaddiq's enemies, especially after he had saved the Prime Minister's life. The failed assassination attempt, known as the coup of Isfand 9, 1331/February 28, 1953, was orchestrated by an organized mob, including Sha'bān Ja'farī, known as Sha'bān Bīmukh (1300–1385/1921–2006). The mob gathered on Kākh Street, pretending to protest, but their true intent was to kill Musaddiq and hang his body from the iron gate of his residence. Everything went according to plan, but when the mob reached Musaddiq's house, they found it empty and resorted to vandalizing and looting it instead. Afshār'tūs had learned of the plot through police intelligence officers. He entered Musaddiq's house from the neighboring Pahlavī Street, informed him of the conspiracy, and safely escorted him in his house clothes through neighboring rooftops to the army headquarters, which was secure and out of the mob's reach.³⁷

From that day on, Musaddiq's opponents knew that to take any action against him, they would first have to eliminate his key ally in the National Police. After Afshār'tūs's murder, investigations into his case began and based on the Tehran military governorate's announcement published in the press at the time, it was revealed that several retired officers, seeking to regain their former positions, had allied with Musaddiq's opponents to weaken the government and advance their own agendas. Amīr Husayn Khatībī, along with Muzaffar Baqā'ī (1291–1333/1912–1987), gathered other retired officers, promising that kidnapping Afshār'tūs would lead to the downfall of Foreign Minister Husayn Fātimī (1296–1333/1917–1954). They agreed that Baqā'ī would become prime minister and form a cabinet in which each officer would be given a position.³⁸ The discovery of Afshār'tūs's murder and the arrest of the perpetrators stirred public opinion in the country due to Musaddiq's efforts. In a poem dedicated to Afshār'tūs, Qudsiyah refers to his abduction, expresses deep sorrow over his death, and laments the state of the nation.



I wish, in such a wretched scene [a Zakhāk-like plight],
Kāvah's banner would rise, with Farīdūn's sword in sight.
Weary I have grown of my homeland's state and all within,
Would that my dwelling lay by the shores of Hāmūn.
If the blood of the homeland's martyrs were united,
A spring would form, with two hundred rivers like the Kārūn.
Alas, the tragedy of the past week, how strange it seems,
Whoever hears of it, their heart's sorrow would be hewn.
Mahmūd's blood was spilled in vain, and God forbid,
A commander struck by the malice of the wicked, amid
'Tūs-Afshār,' may your soul rest in heaven's grace,
O Qudsiyah, without Divine justice, what could remain in
place?³⁹

Characteristics of Qudsiyah's Poetry and Her Collection of Poems (Dīvān)

Qudsiyah's collection of poems (Dīvān) comprises over 1351 couplets, although their actual number remains uncertain. The compilers of her Dīvān acknowledge in the introduction that they were unable to access all her compositions. Her collection of poems is divided into two sections. The first section includes the following six chapters:

Chapter one: On the worship and praise of God and the immaculate Imams

Chapter two: Description of spring and helping the destitute

Chapter three: The poet's attributes and the depths of her emotions

Chapter four: The poet's verses on various social phenomena

Chapter five: Description of conditions in adverse times

Chapter six: Quatrains and miscellaneous poems

The second section of Qudsiyah's *Dīvān* contains a biography of her husband, 'Alī-Akbar Ihtishāmī, along with several of his short poems. Qudsiyah's *Dīvān* does not include any poems in modern poetic forms; it is primarily composed in traditional forms such as ghazal (a lyrical poem, typically expressing themes of love, loss, and mysticism, consisting of rhymed couplets with a refrain), qasīdah (a longer form of poetry, often composed to praise or criticize someone or something, usually containing a central theme or purpose), masnavī (a poem, usually in rhymed couplets, often telling a story or moral lesson), rubā'ī (a quatrain, typically containing philosophical, mystical, or moral themes, with a specific rhyme scheme (AABA)), du-baytī (a short form of poetry consisting of two-line verses, often with a rhyming pattern), tarjī'band (a poetic form consisting of stanzas with a repeated refrain at the end of each verse), and musammat (a type of poem with a fixed pattern of rhyme, where each verse is structured according to a set meter and rhyme scheme). At the end of her *Dīvān*, there is a glossary providing explanations for difficult words used in her poetry.

The most recurring theme in her *Dīvān*, surpassing all others, is that of "the deprived and the poor" and assisting them. This theme is not limited to mere subsistence but encompasses deprivation from education, lack of proper educational and health facilities, unemployment, and various other forms of deprivation. She also criticizes the hoarders and exploiters of the market,



condemning their indifference, as well as the lack of shelter and heating facilities for the poor and homeless. Even in the first chapter of her *Dīvān*, which is dedicated to religious poems, she consistently addresses the suffering of the deprived through her verses. The titles of poems addressing marginalized segments of society and the social consequences of poverty, particularly for children and young couples, are so numerous that merely reading the table of contents makes the reader aware of this repetition. Titles such as “Emphasis on unity and aiding the helpless,” “Advice on assisting the poor,” “Reminder of the oppressed,” and “The ugliness of social poverty,” are common. One such title even reads “The coincidence of the poverty of the poor with the month of Day,” which addresses the difficulties faced by the poor during the cold season:

UpoO abode of felicity, O cherished serpent, the poison of oppression unfolds.⁴⁰

When this poem was written, the poor faced immense hardship during the winter for two reasons: first, the lack of heating, fuel, and shelter made enduring the season difficult, and second, construction and building work ceased during the winter months. Since the marginalized working class was primarily composed of day laborers in construction, rather than industrial workers, this group experienced even greater suffering.

Qudsiyah’s praise of spring is accompanied by a focus on the condition of the underprivileged, as seen in one of her poems titled “*Zībā’ī-yi bahār dar madad bih bīnavāyān*” (The beauty of spring in helping the poor). It is rare to find a title in her *Dīvān* that does not mention poverty, deprivation, unemployment, or ways to assist the needy, often alongside a critique of their living conditions and the lack of essential resources.

Qudsiyah’s poetry is serious and not particularly lyrical. As a poet of the post-constitutional era, she distanced herself from both the imaginary and mystical realms, focusing instead on

⁴¹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 99.

social and political concerns rather than emotional and imaginative expression in her work. It would be misguided to attribute her significance solely to her poetic technique, as she is not particularly remarkable in this regard. Instead, her importance resides in her attempt to bridge the gap between the traditional and modern literary worlds. This shift is not evident in her poetic forms, as she adheres to traditional poetic structures, but in her themes and diction, which break from the conventions of traditional poetry. Qudsiyah also addresses issues rarely found in traditional literature, such as national unity, scientific and cultural advancement, industrial progress, and contemporary political events, aligning her work more closely with modern poetry. In fact, Qudsiyah is a social and political critic, and her poetry should be interpreted from this perspective, rather than through the lens of poetic or artistic innovation. The dominant themes in her *Dīvān* include the importance of education and training, world peace, political unrest and transformations, poverty, unemployment, and advocacy for industrial progress. She also champions work and effort, unlike past poets who tended toward passivity, fatalism, determinism, and renunciation of the world. Other themes in her poetry include patriotism, emphasis on science and opposition to regression, advocacy for political activism, pursuit of freedom, social advice, and the importance of unity. The most frequently recurring themes in her poetry are unity, patriotism, the importance of science and culture, as well as poverty and hardship, along with related issues such as unemployment. In a poem titled “*Futūr-i ittihād-i mīhanī*” (The deterioration of national unity), Qudsiyah writes:

O abode of felicity, O cherished homeland,

Your love has sweetly seized every joint of our being.

With unity and one voice, we move toward our motherland,

If you unite, no deceit will harm us.⁴¹



Qudsiyah reflects on a turbulent contemporary period, referencing events like the Pīshahvarī affair, the rise of Hasan Vusūq, the 1332/1953 Coup, Iran’s occupation during World War II, and other incidents that capture the intellectual climate and concerns of her time. Like many other countries affected by foreign interference and separatist tendencies, Iran provided fertile ground for the emergence of nationalist and patriotic ideas. For this reason, Qudsiyah’s poetry, like that of other patriotic poets such as Bahār, is rich in verses praising the homeland and emphasizing the necessity of national cohesion and unity. In the above verses, Qudsiyah describes Iran as the “abode of felicity,” where its essence has deeply permeated the very fabric of its people. After awakening a sense of patriotism in her audience, she urges them to safeguard the homeland and maintain unity.

Qudsiyah is a freedom-loving poet who rejects leftist ideologies. In her poem “Kiyfar-i kūr’dilī” (The punishment of foolishness), she writes:

Blood was shed in the fight for the homeland’s freedom,

Yet, no sign of justice, love, or equality remains.

My heart grieves for the strife in my cherished land,

For the words of the leftists and Westerners had no guarantee.⁴²

However, this does not imply that the poet was entirely free from socialist inclinations. One recurring theme in her poetry is the struggle against poverty, helping the poor, and the suffering of vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that she was fully committed to any particular ideology. On one hand, humanism, compassion, and the defense of the oppressed and marginalized have long been integral to Iranian literature and culture. On the other hand, Qudsiyah’s era coincided with the peak of left-wing activity in Iran. Given that she explicitly rejected any attachment to “left-wing extremism”

⁴³Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 88.

⁴⁴Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 15.

in her writings, it can be inferred that she adapted the common terminology influenced by the leftist press of the time to align with her own sense of compassion. Her *Dīvān* is replete with praise for the homeland and its people, along with much lamentation and sorrow over the situation both within and outside the country. One of her verses on this subject reads:

The land of Iran has gained fame for its beauty and justice,

O Lord, make the tyrant's demise and his evil a cause for punishment.⁴³

In her advice on unity and the importance of addressing the suffering of workers, she says:

Until the shadow of unity is firmly cast,

The state of this land will not be set right.

As long as the hand of oppression rests upon us,

It's clear that the worker's suffering won't fade.⁴⁴

In the above verses, with their conditional tone, unity is portrayed as essential for order and stability, while the alleviation of the workers' suffering depends on the removal of oppression. This poem has a Marxist foundation, linking unity and the eradication of oppression to the liberation of workers. However, considering her explicit opposition to "left-wing extremism" and the resistance of religious individuals to communism, particularly among the traditional clerical class, it can be inferred that these verses reflect a more "constitutional" outlook rather than Marxist one. These verses suggest that unity is essential for political organization and the establishment of a democratic order, through which tyranny can be dismantled and social issues addressed.



In the following verses addressed to the Shah, in addition to praising him, she urges him to work towards promoting culture:

⁴⁵Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 154.

O morning breeze, tell the Shah of this Persian land,

O support and refuge of the nation, O heir of Jam,

Culture in this land lies weak and humiliated,

My soul is consumed with sorrow at this failure.⁴⁵

Since the historical context and occasion of this poem are not specified, it is unclear whether Qudsiyah's address to the Shah refers to the Qajar monarch, Ahmad Shāh Qajar, or to Rizā Shāh or Muhammad Rizā Shāh Pahlavī. However, this is the only verse in her *Dīvān* that praises a royal figure, and it quickly shifts to a critique of the cultural situation. Apart from this, her *Dīvān* offers no praise for kings or aristocrats.

While it is not possible to definitively determine which political group or party Qudsiyah aligned with, it is clear from her works which factions she did not support. Specifically, she did not accept the Tūdah Party and Marxist ideologies. Her poems written for Afshār'tūs and Muhammad Mas'ūd suggest an affinity for Musaddiq. Moreover, there is not a single verse in her poetry that praises or supports religious leaders and clerics, which suggests a possible sympathy with the National Front. This assumption is further supported by the absence of any praise for Pahlavis, while her poetry is imbued with strong patriotic sentiments against colonialism and the interference of Russia, Britain, and the United States—views that align with the ideology of National Front supporters. One such verse on this subject is:

Iranians, who long for the glory of the Kayanids,

Must first seek out their own Kāvah.

⁴⁶Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 96.

Foreigners have lined up, taking advantage of our weakness,

⁴⁷Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 100.

They exaggerate our flaws, speaking with increasing disdain.

⁴⁸Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 100.

In their misguided thoughts, they turn toward East and West,

As if Iran were fruit, to be swallowed like a peach.

One day, they will unite to tear Iran apart,

Russia and ostentatious England will converse, deciding its fate.⁴⁶

Qudsiyah also addresses the 1332/1953 coup, the nationalization of Iran's oil industry, and the role of the United States in that coup, as well as U.S. interventions in other countries like Chile, strengthening the impression of her broader geopolitical awareness.⁴⁷ It is reasonable to conclude that she was not attached to any specific political faction, but instead defended principles like freedom, truth, struggle against oppression, peace, justice, unity, and patriotism. Her abstention from supporting religious figures is notably apparent, as she never mentions prominent clerics of the time, such as Abū al-Qāsim Kāshānī, Rūh'allāh Khumaynī, and Mīrzā Shīrāzī. Even in her poem responding to Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran, written late in her life, she focuses solely on supporting the people, urging defense of the country, praising the "warriors," and condemning Saddam Hussein and U.S. involvement, without addressing the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic or praising its leaders.⁴⁸

Another recurring theme in Qudsiyah's poetry is social justice. She often advises the wealthy and powerful to assist society's weaker segments, criticizes hoarding and unethical market behavior, defends wealth distribution and welfare policies, condemns capitalists, and occasionally blames politicians' inefficiency for the lack of social justice. One of her most comprehensive poems on this subject offers significant insight into



her views:

⁴⁹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 90.

If wealth were justly distributed,
Schools in the world would be open and free.
If the capitalists had true faith and were fair,
The masses would no longer suffer from poverty.
If the landowners cared for the farmers,
The plight of the laborer would be less harsh.
If kindness, nobility, and chivalry
Were in the hearts of the men of our land,
There would be no misfortune or poverty,
And all people would benefit from prosperity.⁴⁹

The above verses have a leftist tone, with terms like “wealth distribution,” the “unfairness” of capitalists, the “poverty of the masses,” the landowner’s indifference to the farmers, all reflecting the Marxist atmosphere of her time. However, these terms were widely used by intellectuals, novelists, translators, and the press, becoming common expressions. Using these expressions to lament the harsh situation of the country does not necessarily imply adherence to Marxist ideology, especially since she never mentions a “classless society” or defends it, nor frequently mentions “equality.” What stands out more in her poem is her didactic and advisory tone, rather than a defense of any specific ideology.

While she laments oppression, poverty, corruption, inflation, and class disparity, she also expresses concern about ignorance,

lack of education, and the absence of scientific and industrial progress. It seems she sees the solution in promoting knowledge, education, and progress. The following poem, addressed to her husband, suggests that these concerns were deeply troubling to her:

An example of what is evident: severe injustice and poverty,

Corruption, hoarding, and inflation are clear signs.

A calamity worse than all faults is cultural ignorance.

Why has such a trait so deeply infiltrated us?

It is the twentieth century, and where is the flourishing of knowledge?

Many have nothing, not even a simple loaf of bread.

I think of nothing but the promotion of knowledge and art.

I swear by the Surahs of al-Layl, al-Zuhā, and al-Tīn.⁵⁰

There is no trace of terms such as “class struggle,” “class conflict,” “proletariat,” “bourgeoisie,” or similar concepts in Qudsiyah’s poetry. Additionally, her poems show no influence from anti-Western intellectuals or anti-modernist figures. Unlike thinkers such as Muhammad Iqbāl (1877–1938), the Pakistani philosopher and poet, or ‘Alī Shari‘atī (1312–1356/1933–1977), the Iranian intellectual, who explored themes such as the awakening of Muslims, the clash between tradition and modernity, the Islamic Renaissance, and the corruption of the Western world, Qudsiyah never addresses such topics. On the contrary, she consistently advocates for the advancement of industry, education, culture, knowledge, and scientific progress. Her *Dīvān* contains ample evidence of this focus, as seen in her verses.



In addition to her advocacy for freedom and political and social criticism, Qudsiyah holds a progressive worldview. Instead of adopting a pessimistic view of the modern world and new science, she actively supports and promotes them. Unlike earlier poets with Sufi inclinations who often encouraged renunciation of the world, reliance of fate, and passivity, Qudsiyah calls for effort, pursuit of knowledge, cultural enrichment, industrial development, and a strong emphasis on education and training. These qualities mark her as a progressive poet:

⁵¹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 80.

⁵²Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 78.

Hold your tongue from vile speech,

If your words harm friend, what then of your enemy?

Engage in work and action, seek the knowledge of the people,

For eating and sleeping are traits of animals.⁵¹

In a poem she composed on the virtue of knowledge and human talent, she writes:

Through knowledge and skill, the worlds' people find salvation,

With knowledge, humans attain eternal life.

Nothing in the world compares to knowledge and skill (science and industry),

O God! Grant us knowledge and take ignorance from us.

O wise youth, heed my advice,

Dedicate your body to action, so you may transcend this world.⁵²

By using the term “knowledge” (*‘ilm*) in the above verses, Qudsiyah refers to modern empirical science, not the type of wisdom or general knowledge often referenced in traditional

Persian poetry. Her description of science as a means of “eternal life” likely alludes to its transformative contributions in fields such as healthcare, technology, medicine, transportation, and food production. These advancements helped eradicate diseases like polio, save countless lives through improved access to medical care and pharmaceuticals, and significantly enhanced living standards by making life healthier and more comfortable. For this reason, she calls refers to science as the “salvation of the people of the world.” The benefits of science and industry had captured the attention of developing nations at the time, and Qudsiyah explicitly asserts in her verses that nothing surpasses “science and industry.” Her perspective stands in stark contrast to those who advocated for “return to self” and lamented the “alienation” caused by industrialization. It is understandable, then, that she would express frustration with the intellectual, cultural and political barriers that hindered scientific and industrial progress in the country:

Since the decline in the flourishing of science,

Qudsiyah’s heart has become like the house of sorrow, burdened with grief.⁵³

In “*Ārāstīgī’hā-yi vujūdi*” (Existential adornments), while mentioning Iran’s neutrality during World War II, she speaks of altruism, pacifism, and scientific and industrial progress:

Humankind has become like a bloodthirsty warlord,

The one who offers neutrality, we alone are they.

Except for our unity, love, and loyalty to humanity,

Anyone who desires nothing in this world is one of us.

Know that peace among people is a sacred aspiration,



In this race, we are the sole champions of the world.

⁵⁴Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 69.

With reliance on knowledge and scientific expertise,

⁵⁵Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 163.

We will show that we are the best of the world.⁵⁴

⁵⁶Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 172.

Although social and political themes dominate her works, most of her poems are deliberately written in a simple and straightforward language. This intentional simplicity allows readers, especially those who encountered her poems in newspapers of the time, to easily grasp the meaning of the poems. While there may not be significant artistic innovation, her *Dīvān* still includes verses that are artistically crafted:

Through all the trials, his back remained unbowed,

He neither faltered in sorrow, nor wore a frown.

He walked the path of virtue, each step deliberate,

And freed himself from never-ending heavy burdens.⁵⁵

Her poems convey a unique beauty and appeal through coherence, emotional resonance, vivid imagery, and the appropriate use of meter and rhyme, at times echoing the resonance of Khayyam's poetry:

If my tongue bore the thorns of lament,

I would always have a harvest of roses nearby.

If I knew the left hand with the wisdom of the right,

What treasures I would have on both sides, right and left.⁵⁶

In this poem, Qudsiyah uses imagery, attributing the language of lament to the thorn. The harmony of rhyme, along with the

precision in meter and word arrangement, lends her poem a special grace. The thorn, which symbolizes both sorrow (the language of lament) and reward (the harvest of roses), serves as a metaphor for those who are relentless and demanding, ultimately greater rewards as a result. Rarely does a poem of hers fail to reference the suffering of the needy, the poor, and the plight of orphans. While she addresses various social and political issues, and consistently emphasizes unity and patriotism, it is the suffering of the destitute that stands out as the most recurring and emphatically reiterated theme in her poetry. Of course, it should not be forgotten that her adulthood coincided with a period of global famine and internal turmoil:

O rich one, do not forget the heart of the poor,

As you reside in palaces, surrounded by luxury and blooming roses.

An orphan can never be fully sated by mere bread,

When its guardian is an elderly man or a widow, alone.⁵⁷

Political criticism runs through her poetry. She blames the people for their indifference and the politicians for their corruption. She also advocates for freedom and honors the martyrs of liberty on several occasions:

The youth and the brave men of the land, for the sake of freedom,

In this country, I see a blooming rose upon their bloodstained faces.

For how long will a village, by its own fault,

Suffer from indifference and witness the violation of its people's rights?



Where is the government? Where is the nation? Thinking only
of the unemployed,

⁵⁸Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
84–85.

For three decades, I have seen words reduced to mere fables.

⁵⁹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
82.

Everyone is absorbed in their own concerns, oblivious to the
people, the representatives,

⁶⁰Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*,
67.

They have no compassion in their hearts; their fate is the gal-
lows.

A group of profiteers seek their gain from the blood of the peo-
ple,

When will the power of the people be freed from the hands of
the wicked?⁵⁸

Qudsiyah’s poetry belongs to the modern era, and she does not
hesitate to use novel and innovative terms that are not common
among traditional poets. For example, she effortlessly uses the
names of the Gregorian calendar months instead of those of the
lunar or solar calendars:

Your song stirs the heart, so pure and uplifting,

Awakens passion, as March swiftly turns to August.⁵⁹

She is also an advocate of revolution, which is a modern polit-
ical concept:

If our condition remains the same and our day unchanged,

I long for a revolution across all of Iran.⁶⁰

In another instance, she uses the term “heart failure” as a met-
aphor for passive individuals, a usage that required courage at
the time, as such terms were not widely used in social contexts.

⁶¹Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 61.

⁶²Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 48–51.

One who shuns both challenge and test,

Falls to heart failure, and life's light comes to rest.⁶¹

The culmination of her eloquence is found in a musammat titled “*Jilvah'hā-yi bahār*” (Glimpses of spring), which not only employs numerous literary devices but also holds a superior poetic status in comparison to her other works. Below are two of the finest sections of the poem:

With a twisted lock of hair draped around her neck, like a dove,

She wraps a gray shawl over her shoulders.

Like nightingales in the trees, she raises a clamor,

Burnt and reshaped by sorrow's fire, just as I am.

In the absence of love, the mate is scorched by longing.

In the season of spring, behold the fresh, green grass.

Like a lover's handwriting, fresh and pure, behold the nature's charming trace.

Drinkers' passion is ignited upon seeing her,

At her feet, behold the waves of water, weaving a chain.

The hand of fate has scattered emeralds upon the earth.⁶²

Regarding the aesthetics of her poetry, it can be said that her clarity and earnestness, influenced by the poetry of the Constitutional period, have shaped her work to be free from pretension, characterized instead by direct and straightforward expression. Therefore, her poetry rarely includes ambiguity, double meanings, or hidden connections between words and meanings. It



avoids difficult-to-interpret metaphors or complex expressions. She communicates her intentions with transparency, aiming her work at the public, those in the streets and markets, rather than scholars or poetic circles. This accessibility is one of the defining features of Constitutional poetry. At times, her poetry also exhibits strong coherence and balance:

O wheel of fate, what adventure you bring,

Cold-hearted, cruel, and ill-tempered,

You have plundered the goal of this nation,

It's clear you seek nothing but uproar.⁶³

The elements of this poem are intricately woven together, creating a cohesive artistic bond that enhances its vivid imagery. The metaphor “wheel of fate” and its association with “adventure” conjure the playful and mischievous behavior of a child, linking the inevitable passage of time and societal changes. This metaphor also imparts human qualities such as “cold-hearted,” “cruel,” and “ill-tempered” to the unfolding events and circumstances. These characteristics subtly allude to the upheavals and unexpected disruptions that have obstructed the realization of the people’s ideals. The metaphor resonates with terms like “plunder” and “uproar” in the following line, further solidifying the poem’s cohesive imagery. If we interpret “the goal of this nation” as the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution, such as freedom, the eradication of corruption, the elimination of tyranny, injustice, and the creation of social welfare and progress, the events and turmoil that perpetuate despotism and injustice are compared to the adventures of the “wheel of fate” and a heartless child. The child’s constant actions, such as plundering, mischief, and disrupting what others have worked diligently to build, mirror the societal upheavals preventing the achievement of national aspirations. The line “It’s clear you seek nothing but uproar” expresses frustration at the relentless chaos that refus-

⁶³Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 157.

es to subside, perpetuating harm and disorder. Poems like this, in which artistic elements are arranged in such precision and meaning is conveyed through vivid imagery and poetic devices, are rare in Qudsiyah's collection. Most of her *Dīvān* consists of straightforward, unadorned poetry with minimal use of literary devices, as seen in this poem:

Strive in the pursuit of perfection and knowledge,

Make great effort and fervor in action and deed.

If you wish all your work to be well-regarded,

The essence of every task lies in research and study.⁶⁴

The advice and educational guidance in this poem are straightforward; it neither creates a particular imaginative atmosphere nor includes elaborate rhetorical devices. The poem first invites the reader to strive for perfection, then emphasizes the importance of action and practice. The following couplet urges the reader to conduct research and understand the essence of one's tasks in order to gain respect and recognition. The aesthetic value in this poem lies in its emphasis, harmony, and coherence. By highlighting the significance of effort and fervor, Qudsiyah seeks to intensify her message, demonstrating both the positive and negative consequences of various actions and expressing desires, regrets, or offering abundant suggestions, all of which contribute to clarity. In the couplet above, we observe that by juxtaposing "effort," and "fervor," Qudsiyah aims to influence her audience, a technique that appears throughout her collection. Another recurring aesthetic element in her poetry is the use of simile:

If I planted a thorn of sorrow in my heart,

I wouldn't leave it in the garden of your face.



You showed me much cruelty and injustice,

Yet I erased them from my memory's page.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 159.

⁶⁶Ihtishāmī, *Dīvān-i Qudsiyah*, 9.

When addressing historical events and social upheavals, Qudsiyah adopts a minimal aesthetic approach in her poetry. In those instances, which comprise the bulk of her poetry, we encounter straightforward narration, commendation, criticism, and simple moral advice or counsel.

Conclusion

Qudsiyah's poetry is both serious and contemporary, with political and social issues taking precedence over traditional poetic themes. This positions her firmly among the poets of the modern era. However, since the compilers of her *Dīvān* have acknowledged that they included poems not only from published newspapers but also from scraps of paper or notebooks, it remains unclear how seriously she regarded these works. This necessitates a cautious approach when assessing the artistic value of her poetry, and only the most reliable examples of her work should serve as the basis for evaluation. This caution is further warranted by the fact that the compilers did not provide specific details regarding the dates, occasions, or newspapers in which her poems were published; they merely compiled them without additional context.⁶⁶

In essence, Qudsiyah should be seen more as a political and social critic than a rhetorician striving to distinguish herself among poets or seeking to attain a high artistic status among her contemporaries by exhibiting her literary prowess. Although she lived during the time of many great poets, with whom she cannot be compared in terms of literary standing, she surpasses them in her ability to address social concerns and champion the values of courage, integrity, and political independence. She was never beholden to central powers or specific parties. Therefore, she has gifted us with poetry that is authentic, people-cen-

tered, and socially conscious, grounded in genuine concerns and emotion. Ultimately, she should be regarded as an heir to the poetry of the Constitutional Revolution, in which social and political themes outweigh artistic considerations, with a focus on patriotism, the pursuit of freedom, and the political and social transformations in favor of the Iranian nation.

