

**Fatemeh Keshavarz**

## “MUCH HAVE I ROAMED THROUGH THE WORLD”: IN SEARCH OF SA<sup>ḥ</sup>DI’S SELF-IMAGE

Persian literature has produced few poets who can rival Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di. A powerful personality, an undisputed mastery of his art, a far-reaching influence, and an enchanting sense of humor are only a few on the long list of his widely accepted virtues. His critics have described his personality as “curious” and “captivating,” and his poetry as pure magic.<sup>1</sup> As the undisputed master of eloquence he is commonly referred to as *ustād-i sukhan* by the lay and the expert alike. To these cherishing remarks one may easily add a multitude of others and yet they reflect little more than admiration. Curiously, the existing critical literature on Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di offers little in the way of clarification or further exploration of these intriguing but ambiguous descriptions. One is tempted to ask why the “curious” and “captivating” personality of Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di has not been the subject of separate studies. Along the same lines, how accessible is the personality of the poet through his poetry? Or more specifically, what would be the outcome of exploring his works in search of the way he envisioned himself? The present paper is a first step toward such an exploration in an attempt to deal mostly with this last question. If the major aim in any biographical study, as Nadel puts it, is to “discern the complexities of being without pretending that life’s riddles have been answered” then much light could be shed on the complexities of Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di’s personality in this way.<sup>2</sup>

Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di was not shy of making specific references to himself, unlike some other poets such as Baba Tahir (d. 1055–56) who opted for complete anonymity to assume the persona of the selfless universal lover, free of geographical and cultural attachments.<sup>3</sup> Neither did Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di’s references to himself, as did those of Rumi (d. 1273), for example, point to an elusive and restless being who was subject to constant change and therefore belonged neither to the “East” nor to the “West,” to use Rumi’s own words.<sup>4</sup> As a biographical tool, the self-descriptive remarks of Rumi could be problematic not only because of their general character but also on account of their deliberate attempt to magnify the ephemeral and volatile aspect of his nature (and consequently that of all human beings). Differently put, it is difficult to tie him to any specific time, place, or event long enough to permit a searching glance. In complete contrast, Sa<sup>ḥ</sup>di’s allusions to himself are clear and specific, and of a remarkably

Fatemeh Keshavarz is an Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature in the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, Washington University, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63130, U.S.A.

consistent nature throughout his works. Admittedly, the wealth of information available here can be bewildering. Furthermore, it requires a thorough knowledge of the highly stylized modes of expression of the period as well as familiarity with the generic conventions. Sa<sup>c</sup>di's allusions to himself, nevertheless, could be used in a creative and reliable manner to get glimpses of his vibrant personality. The question that follows is how.

In a brief study, and the only one of its kind, Fouchecour has sifted through two of the major works of Sa<sup>c</sup>di, the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān*, in search of the poet's self-descriptive remarks.<sup>5</sup> The article, which is entitled "Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>dī az didgāh-i khvud-i ū" (Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>di's Vision of Himself), is, in fact, a comprehensive list of the poet's moral qualities as articulated by Sa<sup>c</sup>di himself. A second glance at the list, however, reveals that it does not furnish us with many details peculiar to Sa<sup>c</sup>di. That is to say, identical compendia of self-declared virtues, beginning with eloquence and wisdom and continuing with other comparable attributes such as love for learning and candidness, can be easily produced for other Persian poets before and after Sa<sup>c</sup>di. One might add that any sense of astonishment at this seeming excess in self-praise in medieval Persian poetry will be appropriately modified with taking a step back to look at the larger picture. The use of self-congratulatory remarks on the credentials of the poet could then be seen as a sanctioned generic convention. This convention most probably functioned to enhance the effectiveness of ethical guidance put forward in didactic as well as other thematic genres. Put in less technical terms, the value of the imparted wisdom depended, then as now, primarily on how well it was practiced by the preacher. In the humorous words of Hafiz (d. 1320), *Kih wa<sup>c</sup>z-i bi-<sup>c</sup>amalān wājib ast nashanīdan* (For, the sermon of those who do not practice [the religion], it is a religious duty to ignore).<sup>6</sup> Whatever our explanation for the generic function of self-praise in medieval Persian poetry (incidentally, an interesting topic for future research), one may conclude with certainty that compiling a list of self-declared virtues of Persian poets will grant us little access to their self-image in the majority of the cases.

A completely different approach would be to argue that any attempt to explore how a poet envisioned himself will fall within the boundaries of what may be termed "psychological biography." The major question, then, will be how best to utilize works of literature to reach a more vibrant, three-dimensional, closer-to-life sketch of the writers of these works. The prospects here are encouraging. The earlier reluctance to consider writing biographical studies a creative literary task, which until recently prevented critics from deeming it a "proper" genre and theorizing about it, has given way to fresh approaches. More recent efforts emphasize the artistic and seminal aspects of this nonfictional but creative prose writing. For instance, in addition to the former emphasis on the factual and documentary nature of biographical works, critics today acknowledge the value of "the linguistic expression, narrative technique and mythical elements" that the biographer employs to tell his story or depict his subject.<sup>7</sup> On a different level, a major breakthrough is the emphasis on the need to discern a pattern or a repeated image that has a clear metaphorical quality in the works or the life of the subject. To locate such a pattern or master trope—which is then to serve as a unifying factor in the life of the subject—is considered by some, like Nadel, as the main quest of a biographer. In-

deed, Nadel values the availability of such a master trope to the extent of recommending that the biographer impose one "from his own biases" if a "self-generating" pattern does not originate out of the life-materials.<sup>8</sup> The present essay will demonstrate that in the case of Sa<sup>c</sup>di it is particularly beneficial to employ such a master trope to explore his personality, since at least one such major pattern originates out of the poet's life and is easily discernible in his language, whether figurative or referential. This master trope is traveling.

Sa<sup>c</sup>di spent much of his life traveling or talking about it. This leitmotif, persistent throughout his works, is not only developed through nuance and repetition but is often associated with most significant situations and sentiments. As an extended metaphor it stands for the lasting human characteristics of endurance, wisdom, and experience, while as fleeting imagery it alludes, among other things, to adventure, mundane love, and ecstasy. In either case, the person of Sa<sup>c</sup>di is present and accessible in the nuances of emotion attached to this theme. This master trope was, therefore, chosen to be the focus of the present paper, for it is capable of bringing a vast and meaningful array of the poet's experiences together for examination. It is hoped that in this process the personality of Sa<sup>c</sup>di, and in particular his vision of himself, can be explored.

Traveling did not have much significance in the literary life of most medieval Persian poets. By and large, they were not great travelers. Between *sayr-i āfāq* and *sayr-i anfus*, "physical vs. spiritual journey," the majority seem to have favored the latter. Some, like Hafiz and Nizami, so rarely ventured a move from their hometown that when they finally did, much legend was created around the purpose and the outcome of their journeys. Others were mostly forced to travel by wars and other social upheavals or the urge to find a more enthusiastic and generous patron. Even then, hardly any accounts of these journeys figured in their poetry.<sup>9</sup>

The pilgrimage to Mecca, enjoined on every eligible Muslim, inspired poets such as Nasir-i Khusraw (d. between 1072 and 1077) and Khaqani (d. 1199) to produce celebrated literary works, the *Safar<sup>2</sup>nāmah*<sup>10</sup> and the *Tuhfat al-<sup>c</sup>Irāqayn*,<sup>11</sup> respectively. Although a number of issues in these works, such as the wisdom and the confidence of the traveler, his objectivity in observation, and attention to detail, particularly in the *Safar<sup>2</sup>nāmah*, deserves much exploration, the events of these works hardly acquired the personal dimension necessary to make the presence of the poet palpable for close examination.

Sa<sup>c</sup>di, on the contrary, traveled far and wide and allowed the events of these journeys (factual and fictitious alike) to spill into his serious literary productions. He commented frequently on the activity of traveling, recommended wholeheartedly *sayr-i āfāq* along with *sayr-i anfus*, and, moreover, brought under scrutiny the many facets of the personality of the traveler. This keen investigation into the psychology of the traveler is useful for our purpose. It is also indicative of Sa<sup>c</sup>di's awareness of the metaphoric quality of the experience insofar as it defines, and gives expression to, the inner feelings of the traveler. Although one may find allusions to traveling in all of his works, in no other work does Sa<sup>c</sup>di come closer to his traveler self than in the *Gulistān* and the *Būstān*.<sup>12</sup>

Abu <sup>c</sup>Abd Allah Musharrif al-Din ibn Muslih Sa<sup>c</sup>di was born in Shiraz sometime between 1213 and 1219, and he lost his father around the age of twelve.<sup>13</sup> He

began his studies in Shiraz but was driven to Baghdad by the terror of the Mongols and the campaigns of the Khwarazmshahids. A multitude of legendary qualities and events, including a longevity of over 100 years and fourteen journeys to Mecca, have been attached to Sa<sup>c</sup>di's life by biographers such as Dawlatshah.<sup>14</sup> What is certain, however, is that he studied in the Nizamiyya of Baghdad and sometime around 1226 set out on a journey that lasted at least thirty years. Upon his return to Shiraz, in 1256, he composed the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān*.<sup>15</sup> It is this set of journeys, as reflected in these works, that we are here concerned with.

Sa<sup>c</sup>di's biographers do not agree on the scope of his journeys. Some accept that, as he claimed in the *Gulistān* and the *Būstān*, he traveled eastward to India and westward to Africa.<sup>16</sup> Others dismiss the possibility of his journeys to Kashghar and Somnat mentioned in the fifth chapter of the *Gulistān* and the eighth chapter of the *Būstān*, respectively. The Kashghar episode is open to doubt because it claims a reputation for the poet in that area that is unlikely to be substantiated for that period. The Somnat episode, if taken as a factual report, presents an even more serious problem because it pictures Sa<sup>c</sup>di as the main protagonist, involved in the murder of a Hindu priest. Additionally, Sa<sup>c</sup>di seems not to know the proper location of Somnat because, according to the episode in question, he arrives in India after he escapes from Somnat.<sup>17</sup> By accepting the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* as primarily ethical compendia, these historians are at a loss to deal with stories in which Sa<sup>c</sup>di is involved as the protagonist in not very ethical affairs. They are caught between taking such events for facts and consequently having to explain the grotesque personality that Sa<sup>c</sup>di appears to have had, or admitting that the master might have occasionally let his imagination get away with a few inventions. Edward Browne chooses the first option, that is, taking all events mentioned in the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* as factual, and explains away Sa<sup>c</sup>di's resultant moral weaknesses in the following terms: "When Sa<sup>c</sup>di is described (as he often is) as essentially an ethical poet, it must be borne in mind that, correct as this view in certain senses undoubtedly is, his ethics are somewhat different from theories commonly professed in Western Europe."<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, those who acknowledge the possibility of invention adopt an equally naive approach. They accept, for instance, that Sa<sup>c</sup>di could not have been in Somnat, because otherwise he would have realized that it was, in fact, in India.<sup>19</sup> On why he combined fact with fiction, however, they argue passionately that Sa<sup>c</sup>di was unaware of these inventions in the narrative because of his preoccupation with the intricacies of the form. ʿAbbas Iqbal says: "He has been so occupied with eloquence and rhetorical embellishment that his close attention to the beauty of the form has prevented him from distinguishing true from false."<sup>20</sup> Such accusations of unawareness will not be necessary if the idea that the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* are ethical compendia is appropriately modified. Jalal Matini's suggestion that both of them be included in the genre of *maqāmāt* certainly explains the fictional character of the narratives.<sup>21</sup> Because the use of *sajʿ*, the episodic structure and the significance of wit and eloquence in these works correspond to the commonly held description of *maqāmāt*,<sup>22</sup> Matini's suggestion merits serious consideration.<sup>23</sup> That Sa<sup>c</sup>di made major modifications in the example of Qazi Hamid al-Din Balkhi (d. 559), the author of the best known *maqāmāt* in Persian, how-

ever, should be taken into account. Matini observes that, without these modifications, Sa<sup>c</sup>di would not have enjoyed the measure of success that he did in utilizing *maqāma*, a genre essentially unsuitable for the Persian language.<sup>24</sup>

Sa<sup>c</sup>di himself chooses a more humorous way of alluding to the fictitious nature of his anecdotes in the first chapter of the *Gulistān*, where the traveler protagonist of the story, who is to be punished for his lies, says to the king: "If thou hast heard heedless talk from thy slave, be not offended. A man who has seen the worlds utters much falsehood!" (p. 107). Or in Sa<sup>c</sup>di's more candid words, *Jahān<sup>2</sup> didah bisyār gūyad durūgh* (p. 104).

The verdict of the king who grants the stranger forgiveness for his honest confession is another humorous warning by Sa<sup>c</sup>di to his readers to understand and overlook the occasional fiction or exaggeration that he has indulged in. After all, only a true traveler knows how necessary it is to let the trying events of a long journey undergo a major reconstruction of the imagination before they are prepared for the inexperienced ears of the city dwellers. It is also a warning that nothing in the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* is to be taken literally.<sup>25</sup>

Whether Sa<sup>c</sup>di traveled to Somnat or not, and whether he did or did not indulge in deliberate literary invention, everything that takes place in the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* is, for our purposes, real. For we are not concerned here with historicity but rather with the measure of access that these events grant us to the way Sa<sup>c</sup>di envisioned travelers—and, in many cases, by extension himself—as it comes to light during these anecdotes. The example of the traveler who concocted stories, in fact, brings us to our first significant point: Sa<sup>c</sup>di closely identified with travelers and with those who do not belong to a place but rather pass through it. Not stray and aimless passers-by, who have been cast adrift by accidental waves, but intelligent travelers in control of events, who plan their moves and whose presence or absence makes a lasting impression not only on the host city, but even on the fate of the king who rules it. The kings are thus advised in the first chapter of the *Būstān*:

Buzurgān musāfir bi-jān parvarand	Great men cherish the traveler with very soul
Kih nām-i nīkū <sup>2</sup> i bi- <sup>c</sup> alam barand	that he may carry a fair name to all the world
Tabah gardad ān mamlikat <sup>c</sup> anqarīb	soon to ruin that realm comes whence
Kaz ū khāṭir āzurdah āyad gharīb. (p. 228)	mind-afflicted comes the stranger. (p. 18)

Even more conspicuously, in the third chapter of the *Gulistān*, a young athlete asks for the permission of his father to travel. In the father's reply, five models for a successful traveler are described. The second model on the list is unmistakably Sa<sup>c</sup>di himself:

Duvvum, <sup>c</sup> ālimī kih bi-mantiq-i shīrīn va-quvvat-i faṣāḥat va-māyah- <sup>2</sup> i balāghat har jā ravad bi-khidmat-i ū iqdām va-ikrām kunand. (p. 145)	Secondly, a scholar who is for the pleasantness of his speech, the power of his eloquence and the fund of his instruction, waited upon and honoured wherever he goes. (p. 165)
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This leads us to our next observation. Not surprisingly, this wise and confident traveler, who is the maker of events, is captivated, deep down, by the irresistible, almost magical attraction of traveling. In the fifth chapter of *Būstān*:

Safar nāgham zān zamīn dar rubūd. (p. 335) But all without warning, travel from that land did carry me away. (p. 154)

As if underneath all the confidence and the wisdom, he is searching for a shield to hide behind, a world of anonymity and equality in which to lose himself, a kind of oblivion not unlike death. The *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* are full of imagery common to traveling and death such as *darwāza-yi marg*, "death's gateway," *kūs-i riḥlat*, "the drum of death," and the like. One may rightly argue that this much is common to all of medieval Persian poetry. What makes it peculiar to Sa<sup>c</sup>di, however, is not the imagery itself but the positive and rather entertaining nuance that it acquires in place of the usual emphasis it has on the shortness of life. In reality, or in his imagination, Sa<sup>c</sup>di enormously enjoyed appearing in disguise to observe the effect of his poetry on its audiences, for like many people of high reputation, he must have had a curiosity about how his work was judged in his absence.

On the question of Sa<sup>c</sup>di's reputation, we have to be momentarily sidetracked to make an observation. Many historians have argued that all of Sa<sup>c</sup>di's fame came with the composition of the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* so he could not have been a well-known poet during his travels.<sup>26</sup> This suggestion does not sound all that persuasive. The assumption that Sa<sup>c</sup>di composed no *ghazals* prior to the above works and turned into *ustād-i sukhan* all at once is a curious one. Sa<sup>c</sup>di himself certainly claims otherwise in the *dibāchah* to the *Gulistān* when he talks of "the good reputation of Sa<sup>c</sup>di which is current among the people, the renown of his eloquence which has spread on the surface of the earth . . . and the scraps of his literary compositions which are hawked about like bills of exchange" (p. 60). Claims like these could not be made in vain when the contemporaries could easily detect their falsehood. In addition, external evidence shows that Sa<sup>c</sup>di's reputation had traveled at least as far as Konya decades before his death.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the assumption that Sa<sup>c</sup>di enjoyed some reputation in some of the places he traveled to cannot be too far removed from the truth.

Whether his reputation was substantial during his travels, whether he met a young admirer in Kashghar, and whether he got entangled in a disputation with scholars who did not recognize him at first (as reported in the fourth chapter of the *Būstān*), or whether all this was a figment of his imagination, it is obvious that, to him, one of the luxuries that travel offered was anonymity and the possibility of observing without being observed. If he chose to, he could finally let the common people see a glimpse of his genius, disappear, and leave them dumbfounded thinking "who else could he have been but Sa<sup>c</sup>di." This is exactly what happens when he leaves after the disputation with the scholars:

Naqib az payash raft ū har sū davīd	The beadle set out after him, running every whichway
Kih mardī bi-dīn na <sup>c</sup> t ū šūrat kih did?	Asking who had seen a man of his description and appearance
Yakī guft az īn nau <sup>c</sup> shīrīn'nafas	Said one; of sweet-breathed men like that,
Dar īn shahr Sa <sup>c</sup> dī shināsīm ū bas (p. 315)	I know but one in this whole town, and that is Sa <sup>c</sup> di. (p. 130)

Another attraction of traveling for Sa<sup>c</sup>di was undoubtedly in the challenges that it presented, challenges that were at once mental, physical, and spiritual. A trav-

eler was, for instance, expected to resist temptations of involvement in adventures harmful to his journey's ultimate goals. At the same time, he needed to exhibit patience and endurance in the event of an unfriendly encounter in a host city. Similarly, he had to put his physical strength to the test in the face of excessive hunger, thirst, and other problems presented by nature. We in the present century have a rather different idea of traveling. In Sa<sup>c</sup>di's times, needless to say, this activity required more than a ticket and a place of destination. Those who made the mistake of not realizing the danger paid dearly for their ignorance. In this chaotic world of adventures, no possibility was to be completely ruled out. One could be forced into marriage with the ugly daughter of a self-appointed friend, one's trusted fellow traveler could turn out to be a thief in disguise (as in the second chapter of the *Gulistān*), or, worst still, one could be accused of spying in a God-forsaken land where the locals could go so far as to put one in a closet and "wall up the aperture with mud bricks," an ordeal that could last as long as two weeks before the innocence of the traveler is proved. This is what happens to the two Khurasani dervishes, one of whom is weak and the other strong, in the third chapter of the *Gulistān*:

<p>Qazā rā bar dar-i shahrī bi-tuhmat-i jāsūsī girištār āmadand. Har dū rā bi-khānah<sup>2</sup>i kardand va-dar bi-gil bar āvardand. (p. 135)</p>	<p>It happened that they were captured at the gate of a town on suspicion of being spies; whereon each of them was confined in a closet and the aperture of it walled up with mud bricks. (p. 151)</p>
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The traveler, therefore, is not to be taken lightly. After all, he is the champion of this world of unpredicted adventures in which adventurism is only one of the qualities necessary for survival. The opposite is true, too. The personality of those who have not traveled leaves something to be desired. Not only is the young warrior in the seventh chapter of the *Gulistān*, after years of preparation and training, unable to put his skills to the test because he is *mutana<sup>c</sup>im va-parvardah* as opposed to *jahān<sup>2</sup>didah wa-safar<sup>2</sup>kardah*, but even the hermit from Damascus, in the second chapter of the same work, loses all his spiritual merits as a result of giving in to the comforts of city life.

Against this background, the pride that Sa<sup>c</sup>di takes in his own journeys makes more sense. It becomes more understandable why he does not fail to specify the location of an event even when it seems to be of secondary or no relevance to the story. There are at least twenty-five such references in the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* as well as many more allusions to his journeys to remote lands that remained unnamed. The benefits to be gained by traveling explain why Sa<sup>c</sup>di, at times, recommends this activity in much the same way that a physician prescribes a bitter medicine: for the cure that follows rather than the pleasure of the action itself:

<p>Zi zulmat matars ay pasandīda dūst Kih mumkin buvad ki-āb-i hayvān dar ūst Nah gītī pas az junbish ārām yāft? Nah Sa<sup>c</sup>di safar kard tā kām yāft? (p. 532)</p>	<p>Fear not the dark, esteemed friend, For living water may lie therein After commotion, has not the world found rest? Did not Sa<sup>c</sup>di travel till he found his desire? (p. 176)</p>
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Despite Sa<sup>c</sup>di's emphasis on the educational merits of traveling, he does not appear to have traveled in pursuit of a specific teacher. Rather, he seems to have

viewed his own journeys as education of a practical nature complementing his scholastic training. In particular, he takes pride in having spent time with people of various backgrounds and persuasions. As a result, he rightly claims in the *dī-bāchah* to the *Būstān*, “from every harvest I have gained a corn-ear.”

Dar aqṣā-yi ʿālam bigashtam basī	Much have I roamed through the world's far quarters
Bi-sar burdam ayyām bā har kasī	Spending my days with all and sundry;
Tamattu <sup>c</sup> bi-har gūshah- <sup>2</sup> i yāftam	Enjoyment I have found in every nook,
Zi har kharmanī khūshah- <sup>2</sup> i yāftam	From every harvest I have gained a
(p. 220)	corn-ear. (p. 8)

Whether planned for learning purposes or not, there is little doubt that Sa<sup>c</sup>di's journeys are the prime source of his insight into human psychology as well as his ability, rare for his time, to see benefit in diversity and difference. He clearly prefers to live in and benefit from a world colored with disagreement and quest for learning than a dull and homogeneous world that submits to one persuasion blindly. The wise man who arrives from a journey over the sea of ʿUmman, and whose knowledge and wisdom are a synthesis of Muslim and non-Muslim learning, acquired through mixing with a variety of peoples all over the world, is clearly Sa<sup>c</sup>di's personification of an ideal wise man:

Zi daryā-yi ʿUmmān barāmad kasī	From Oman sea there came a man, much
Safar kardah hāmūn ū daryā basī	traveled by ocean and desert,
ʿArab dīdah ū Turk ū Tājik ū Rūm	Arab he'd seen, and Turks, Persians and
	Byzantines
Zi har jīns dar nafs-i pākash ʿulūm	From every race his pure soul had learned
	its science
Jahān gashtah ū dānish andūkhtah	World-Wandered, wisdom he'd amassed:
Safar kardah ū ṣuḥbat āmūkhtah (p. 230)	Traveled, he'd learned sociability. (p. 21)

This ʿUmmani character in the first chapter of the *Būstān* is the closest that we can get to an existing self-image or an ideal toward which the poet has been striving.

Whichever we choose to accept, Sa<sup>c</sup>di's own awareness of the diversity of the world and the complexity of human nature, reminiscent of his ʿUmmani scholar, is detectable in his assessment of good and evil. In the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* absolute good and bad do not rule the world. Nothing is completely black and white, and there is pleasure as well as benefit in exploring the shades in between. Traveling, for instance, is a most beneficial activity, but even the traveler may be traveling for the wrong reasons. He may be so blinded by pursuit of material gain that he completely loses sight of the pleasures he may discover in seeing the world. A good example is the greedy merchant in the oasis of Kish who “possesses one hundred and fifty camel loads of merchandise with forty slaves, and who invites Sa<sup>c</sup>di to his quarters one evening” to spend the whole night enumerating the goods that he is planning to buy in each city on his route and sell in the next. He sounds like a sleep-talker, has been everywhere but has seen nothing, and although he tries hard to anticipate a point at which he would retire from endless journeys of trade, as Sa<sup>c</sup>di observes, his ailment may have no other cure but death:



<p>Ān shanīdastī kih dar aqṣā-yi Ghūr Bār'sālārī bi-uftād az sutūr Guft: chashm-i tang-i dunyā<sup>3</sup> dūst rā Yā qanā<sup>c</sup>at pur kunad yā khāk-i gūr (p. 142)</p>	<p>Thou mayest have heard that in the plain of Ghur Once a leader fell down from his beast of burden, Saying: the narrow eye of the wealthy man Will be filled either by content or by the earth of the tomb. (p. 161)</p>
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Between the traveler who returns from his journeys a saintly wise man and the one who is gripped by monomania of material gain, there are gradations: normal folks, ordinary travelers. Interestingly enough, the ordinary traveler has his weaknesses too. He feels like a sick person who would only be cured with a drink of water from his native town, from time to time. In addition, he is often accused of carelessness and instability:

<p>Safar<sup>3</sup>kardagān lā<sup>3</sup>ubālī ziyand Kih parvardah-<sup>3</sup>i mulk ū daulat nayand (p. 232)</p>	<p>Who've traveled much live carelessly Not by realm and empire nurtured they. (p. 23)</p>
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An envious vizier accuses a wise traveler in chapter 1 of the *Būstān*. Sa<sup>c</sup>di agrees with this accusation at least in one incident, in the sixth *bāb* from the *Būstān*:

<p>Sukūnī bi-dast āvar ay bī-sabāt Kih bar sang-i gardān narūyad nabāt (p. 344)</p>	<p>Acquire of rest a measure, you who lack stability For herbage will not grow upon a rolling stone. (p. 166)</p>
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Sa<sup>c</sup>di has had ethical points to make in composing the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān*. Nevertheless, these works, if taken only as dry moral lessons, completely lose their spirit. The key to Sa<sup>c</sup>di's world is to understand his ever-present sense of humor. Whether talking about strangers who can freely lie, travelers who get locked up in a closet, or marriages that are worse than captivity, Sa<sup>c</sup>di teaches the reader always to be prepared for a smile. This underlying humorous tone is present in the poet's other works, too. Skalmowski is most probably referring to the same thing when he talks about "a joke-like combination of interconnected images" in the *ghazals* of Sa<sup>c</sup>di.<sup>28</sup>

It would be regrettable to close this discussion without referring to Sa<sup>c</sup>di's most outstanding quality, namely his pragmatism, in relation to travel. Sa<sup>c</sup>di devoted much of his attention to simple daily matters in life, a quality he did not share with many of his contemporaries. Mahmud Shabistari and Fakhr al-Din <sup>c</sup>Iraqi, for instance, were engaged in highest levels of mystical speculation in the *Gulshan-i rāz* and the *Lama<sup>c</sup>āt*, while Sa<sup>c</sup>di busied himself with "the cat who learned contentment," "the old man who could not bear the gayness of the youths," and "the prince with a dislocated neck."

It is no wonder then that in Sa<sup>c</sup>di's life *sayri-i āfāq* (physical journey) took precedence over *sayr-i anfus* (spiritual journey). For a man of such practical mentality, it is only too fitting to actually go out in search of his ideals as opposed to seeking them in seclusion. And isn't he saying the same thing in the second chapter of the *Būstān* in the story of the man who had lost his son in a journey?

<p>Yakī rā pīsar gum shud az rāhila Shabāngah bi-gardīd dar qāfila</p>	<p>A man once lost his boy while in a convoy at nightfall he wandered round the caravan</p>
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Zi har khayma pursid ū har sū shitāft

Bi-tārikī ān raushanā<sup>2</sup>i bi-yāft  
Chū āmad bar-i mardum-i kārivān  
Shanīdam kih mīguft bā sārīvān

And exclaims the joyous father:

Nadānī kih chūn rāh burdam bi-dūst?  
Har ān kas kih pīsh āmadam guftam  
“ūst”

Az ān ahl-i dil dar pay-i har kasand  
Kih bāshad kih rūzī bi-mardī rasand  
Barand az barā-yi dilī bār'hā  
bered

Khurand az barā-yi gulī khār'hā.  
(p. 286)

asking at every tent and hastening in all  
directions

at length he found that brightness in the dark  
When to the caravan's members he returned  
I heard him saying to the convoy leader:

know you how I came across my friend?  
whoever came before me I said “It's him!”

this is why men of heart pursue one and all  
that they may one day reach a man perchance  
for one heart they will carry loads unnum-  
bered

for one rose's sake they swallow many thorns.  
(p. 92)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jan Rypka, *History of Persian Literature*, trans. P. Van Popta-Hope (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1968), 250.

<sup>2</sup>Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 153.

<sup>3</sup>Rypka, *History of Persian Literature*, 234.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 240–42.

<sup>5</sup>Charles-Henri de Fouchécour, “Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>dī az didgāh-i khvud-i ū” in *Zikr-i Jamil-i Sa<sup>c</sup>dī: Collected Articles and Poems for the Commemoration of the 800th Birth Anniversary of Sheikh Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, 3 vols. (Tehran: National Commission of Unesco in Iran and Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1987), 3:131–41.

<sup>6</sup>Hāfiẓ, *Divān-i Hāfiẓ-i Shirāzi*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī and Qāsim Ghani (Tehran: Nashr-i Ṭulū<sup>c</sup>, 1982), 282.

<sup>7</sup>Nadel, *Biography*, 151. For other interesting works concerning the more recent approaches to biography, see Gail Porter Mandell, *Life into Art: Conversations with Seven Contemporary Biographers* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991); idem, *Studies in Biography*, ed. Daniel Aaron (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>8</sup>Nadel, *Biography*, 158.

<sup>9</sup>A well-known example of a poet traveling in search of a proper patron is the case of Farrukhi (d. 1037–38) who “from being in the service of a *dihgān* came via the court of Chaghāniyān to Ghazna, where he sang the praises of Maḥmūd,” Rypka, *History*, 176.

<sup>10</sup>Zabīh Allāh Ṣafā, *Tārikh-i Adabiyāt dar Irān* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Firdaws, 1987), 2:893–989.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 776–83.

<sup>12</sup>For information on various editions and translations of the *Gulistān* and the *Būstān*, see John D. Yohannan, *The Poet Sa<sup>c</sup>dī: A Persian Humanist* (New York: University Press of America, 1987), 1–16. For Persian quotations from the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān* the following has been used: *Kulliyāt-i Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Furūghī (Tehran: Mūsā ‘Ilmi, 1959). For English quotations from the *Būstān* and the *Gulistān*, see *Morals Pointed and Tales Adorned: The Būstān of Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, trans. G. M. Wickens (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); *The Gulistān or Rose Garden of Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, trans. Edward Rehatsek (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965).

<sup>13</sup>Rypka, *History of Persian Literature*, 250–53; for a more detailed account, see Henri Masse, *Essai sur le poète Saadi* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1919).

<sup>14</sup>Jalāl Matīnī, “Maqāmah<sup>2</sup>i manzūm bi-zabān-i Fārsī,” *Irān Nāmah* 3 (1985): 706. For a comprehensive and critical review of biographical works on Sa<sup>c</sup>dī, see Muḥammad Muḥīṭ Ṭabāṭabā<sup>2</sup>i, “Nukātī dar Sarguzasht-i Sa<sup>c</sup>dī” in *Zikr-i Jamil-i Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, 3:185–211.

<sup>15</sup>Rypka, *History of Persian Literature*, 250.

<sup>16</sup>In addition to the works which all discuss Sa<sup>c</sup>di's travels, for specific treatment of the subject, see John Andrew Boyle, "The Chronology of Sa<sup>c</sup>di's Years of Travel," in *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen: Fritz Meier zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. R. Gramlich (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 1–8; Hasan Nishat Ansari, "Did Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>di Visit India?" *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 59 (1973): 173–86; Ahmedmian Akhtar, "Sa<sup>c</sup>di's Visit to Somnat," *Islamic Culture* 8 (1934): 212–21; Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia: From Firdawsi to Sa<sup>c</sup>di* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 528–29, accepts that Sa<sup>c</sup>di traveled eastwards to India and westwards to Africa.

<sup>17</sup>Browne, *Literary History*, 529.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 530.

<sup>19</sup>Ansari, "Did Shaykh Sa<sup>c</sup>di Visit India?," 185–86.

<sup>20</sup>Abbās Iqbāl, "Zamān-i Tavallud va Avā<sup>2</sup>il-i zindagāni-i Sa<sup>c</sup>di," *Majallah-i Ta<sup>c</sup>lim wa-Tarbiyat* (Bahman wa Isfand 1937): 636.

<sup>21</sup>Matīnī, "Maqāmah-<sup>2</sup>i manzūm bi-zabān-i Fārsī," 716–20.

<sup>22</sup>A. F. L. Beeston, "al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī and the *maqāmāt* Genre," in *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 135.

<sup>23</sup>One can briefly note here that other generalizations and unquestioned notions of generic function in Persian poetry call for serious modification. Panegyric poetry, for instance, long taken as a symptom of social moral decay and an instrument of material gain is shown, in the light of more recent studies, to have had a more complex and significant function. In the case of Sa<sup>c</sup>di, this is well demonstrated by Barat Zanjani's analysis of the panegyric *qaṣīda* written for Atabak. See Barāt Zanjāni, "Sukhanwari-i zīrakānah dar Qalamraw-i Sa<sup>c</sup>di" in *Zikr-i Jamīl-i Sa<sup>c</sup>di*, 2:197–208.

<sup>24</sup>Matīnī, "Maqāmah-<sup>2</sup>i manzūm bi-zabān-i Fārsī," 717–18.

<sup>25</sup>Ashraf Abu Turab Zia Sardar, *A Time to Speak: Anecdotes from Sa<sup>c</sup>di Shirazi* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1976), 2.

<sup>26</sup>Rypka, *History of Persian Literature*, 250.

<sup>27</sup>Mujtabā Mīnuvī, "Zikr-i jamīl-i Sa<sup>c</sup>di," *Yaghmā* 3 (1952): 97–102.

<sup>28</sup>Wojciech Skalmowski, "Notes on the Ghazals of Sa<sup>c</sup>di and Hafiz," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 10 (1979): 273.