



From Marginalization to Reconciliation: The Evolution of Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil Studies in Contemporary Iran

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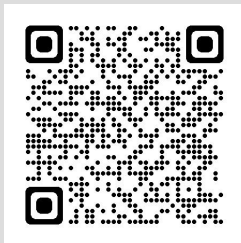
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Abstract: Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil (1054–1133 AH / 1644–1720 CE), born in Azim-Abad (Patna), India, and known in Iran as Bedil Dehlawi, is one of the leading Persian poets of the Indian Style (Sabk-e Hendi). While he has been widely celebrated in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Indian Subcontinent for his mystical depth and intellectual sophistication, Bedil remained marginal and often criticized in Iran until the mid-twentieth century. This article adopts a historical and cultural-analytical approach based on textual and archival sources to explore the factors behind his marginalization and the subsequent process through which Iranian literary circles gradually reconciled with and reappraised his work. Findings indicate that the dominance of Iranian cultural nationalism prior to the Islamic Revolution was the primary barrier, alongside geographical distance, limited access to his writings, disinterest in the Indian Style, and the complexity of his poetic language. This study highlights the evolution of Bedil studies in contemporary Iran and the broader dynamics of literary reception.

Keywords: *Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil, Indian Style, Iran, Bedil Studies.*

1. Introduction

Persian literature, as one of the oldest and richest literary traditions in the world, has long served as a cultural bridge connecting Persian-speaking peoples across a vast expanse—from the Iranian Plateau to the Indian Subcontinent and Central Asia. Within this civilizational sphere, numerous poets and thinkers have emerged, each leaving an indelible mark on the development of Persian language and culture. Among them, Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil (1644–1720 CE), a major representative of the *Indian Style (Sabk-e Hendi)*, occupies a particularly distinguished position. Through his richly imaginative language, abundant imagery, allegory, and profound philosophical and mystical reflections, Bedil elevated Persian poetry to a level of complexity and conceptual depth rarely seen in its history.

While in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and India, Bedil’s works were not only studied by scholars, but also recited and appreciated by the general public so much; so that *Bedilkhani* (the collective reading of Bedil’s poetry) became a living part of their cultural tradition. His position among Iranian literati remained rather obscure until only a few decades ago. For many years, he was dismissed as an “obscure”, “verbose” or even “incomprehensible” poet. Yet, following a series of intellectual and cultural shifts, Bedil has gradually gained recognition and respect among Iranian poets, scholars, and critics.

This article seeks to examine the transformation in Iranian cultural attitudes that led to Bedil's transition from an unfamiliar and marginalized poet to one admired and celebrated in contemporary Iran. It also aims to identify and analyze the factors behind both his earlier neglect and his later revival by drawing on relevant literary works, articles, books, and academic conferences devoted to his legacy.

The study of the evolution of *Bedil Studies* in contemporary Iran can illuminate not only the dynamics of Bedil's literary reception, but also broader mechanisms concerning the interaction among Persian-speaking cultures, the discourse of nationalism, and the literary policies of modern Iran. Understanding these factors contributes to a more precise comprehension of the cultural boundaries within the Persianate world and the processes through which literary identities are reconstructed.

Moreover, analyzing the process of Bedil's reintegration into Iran's intellectual and literary landscape can serve as a model for examining the reception of other transnational poets such as Amir Khusraw and Mirza Asadullah Ghalib.

This research, adopting a historical–analytical approach, draws on the works of several scholars and critics from Iran, Afghanistan, India, and Central Asia to address a key question: How did Bedil transform from a marginal and controversial figure into a celebrated and admired poet in Iran? To answer this, the study first presents the reasons for Bedil's marginalization in Iran based on the views of literary scholars, and then traces the transformation of Iranian perspectives from neglect and controversy to reconciliation and renewed appreciation.

2. the Factors Behind the Marginalization of Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil in Iran

1.2. Geographical Distance from Bedil's Homeland and Prejudgments Toward Him

During a trip to Kabul in the month of Jaddi (January) 2017, I had the opportunity to meet *Najm al-'Urafa* Haidari Wujudi (1939–2020) at the Kabul Public Library. According to his own account, Wujudi had devoted nearly twenty-five years to the study and teaching of Bedil's poetry and thought. When I asked him why Iranian readers became acquainted with Bedil's works so late, he offered the following explanation:

Most of those who have expressed negative opinions about Bedil and Sa'eb, labeling them as writers of meaningless verse, have in fact never read their works. Moreover, Iranians have generally preferred poetry that conforms to conventional norms, whereas Bedil, in his poetic constructions, often ventured far beyond those norms. His language is densely layered, with metaphors built upon metaphors. To readers unaccustomed to his manner of expression, the subtlety and complexity of his imagination can be difficult to grasp. Yet once they become familiar with his style, it is nearly impossible for them to turn away from it. This is why even some of the great masters of Persian literature were initially skeptical of Bedil's poetry and dismissed it as incoherent—but later realized that such judgments were mistaken.ⁱ

The remarks of Haidari Wujudi underscore an important point: Bedil's marginalization in Iran was not simply a matter of geography, but also of cultural and aesthetic distance. His elaborate imagery and deviation from traditional poetic norms made his works appear inaccessible to readers accustomed to the classical Iranian canon. Consequently, for many years, Bedil's name was either absent from Iranian literary discourse or mentioned only in passing as an example of excessive complexity.

According to Haidari Wujudi, another reason for Bedil's relative obscurity in Iran may have been his place of residence, which lay outside the immediate geographical and cultural sphere of Iran. For instance, Afghanistan's longstanding historical and cultural ties with India created conditions more conducive to the study and appreciation of Bedil's works than those found in Iran. Undoubtedly, the degree of access to a poet's works is one of the main factors determining his fame and popularity and such access first became available in Afghanistan and India.

Wujudi further observed that when one considers Bedil's reputation and popularity across different literary regions of Afghanistan, it becomes evident that his fame has generally been greater in areas geographically more distant from Iran. For example, when comparing Herat and Badakhshan of Afghanistan, Bedil's popularity in Badakhshan - which is located farther from his native land - has been notably stronger than in Herat.

In line with Wujudi's remarks, it appears largely true that many of those who expressed negative opinions about Bedil did so without ever having read his works in full, relying instead on secondhanded judgments and superficial impressions. One piece of evidence supporting this claim is the well-known shift in the views of the prominent Iranian scholar Shafi'i Kadkani, who, after repeatedly studying Bedil's poetry, eventually revised his earlier opinion of him.

In his article "*Hafez and Bedil in the Literary Milieu of Transoxiana*", Shafi'i Kadkani, referring to *Bedil readings (Bedilkhani)* among the peasants and common people of Tajikistan—recorded in the memoirs of Sadriddin Aaini—emphasizes that Iran's distance from the cultural sphere of India played a decisive role in shaping its unfamiliarity with Bedil's poetic world.

An essential point raised in this discussion concerns the following question: *What does the illiterate peasant of Transoxiana, who sings Bedil's poetry aloud and recites his verses on quiet nights, actually understand from them? Or similarly, what do ordinary people in Afghanistan perceive from Bedil readings that we, the educated class on this side [in Iran], fail to grasp? It seems that we in Iran stand outside the continuing literary tradition of Bedil's poetic language. This rupture from that living tradition is the principal reason for our alienation from Bedil's world (Kadkani, 2010: 105).*

A number of Iranian historians and literary scholars have likewise confirmed that geographical distance contributed to the linguistic and cultural separation between the poets of India and those of Iran. As a result, they argue, the language of Indian Persian poets was no longer "pure Persian". Zabihollah Safa, in his monumental five-volume *History of Persian Literature*, after naming eight poets of the Indian Style, including Bedil, writes:

The excesses of these poets, and of all those who later attempted to follow the manner of Asir and Sa'eb both in India and Iran, led to the disrepute and eventual abandonment of this style in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries [nineteenth and twentieth CE] in Iran. Particularly, the language of these Indian-style poets, due to the gradual loss of contact between Iran and India, became detached from standard Persian and turned into an artificial dialect that should rightly be called 'Indian Persian (Safa, 1987: 534).

From these statements, it becomes clear that both Kadkani and Safa attribute Bedil's marginality in Iran, at least in part, to a cultural rupture caused by geographical separation between Iran and India. However, Safa's assertion implies that the poets of the Indian Style in the Subcontinent were themselves responsible for their marginalization, having departed from what he terms "pure Persian". As will be discussed later, this claim has been critically challenged by other scholars who view such linguistic judgments as culturally biased rather than philologically accurate.

2.2. The Complexity of Bedil's Poetic Language

The complexity of Bedil's poetic language has been widely recognized among Iranian scholars and stylists. Even Malek al-Sho'ara Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, in his three-volume work "Stylistics", a comprehensive book in this field, mentions Bedil only once. While criticizing Indian prose, he writes: "Bedil and Ghani intended to produce expressions that align with artifice and theme, rather than with any purpose they might have had, and often they had no purpose at all" (Bahar, 1369: 259). This passage suggests that Mohammad-Taqi Bahar regarded Bedil's language as artificial, devoid of purpose and substance.

Abdol-Husain Zarrinkob (1923–1999) also critiqued Bedil's poetry, writing: "Some poets, in their pursuit of novel meanings, have gone to extremes, and this is precisely what has made the poetry of certain Indian poets, such as Fayzi, Ghalib and especially Abdul-Qadir Bedil excessively difficult at times" (Zarrinkob, 1371: 133). Elsewhere, he identifies this very characteristic as the reason for Bedil's obscurity and lack of recognition in Iran, stating: "Perhaps this element of peculiarity in his thought and expression is one of the main reasons he remained obscure and unknown in Iran, especially since the peak of his fame at the end of the Safavid era coincided with a period when Persian poetry, in the works of figures such as Moshtaq, Hatef, Azar, and Sabahi, was preparing for the 'Literary Return' movement, and what is known as the Indian style was gradually losing its significance and prestige" (Zarrinkob, 1374: 43).

At the same time, he describes Bedil as a "wondrously unique figure" with a completely fresh perspective and an almost unparalleled mode of expression. (Zarrinkob, 1374: 44) As evident from the above passages, Zarrinkob acknowledges Bedil's marginalization but ultimately praises him, characterizing his vision as innovative and his language as "almost unparalleled". Zarrinkob's perspective directly challenges Bahar's claim.

Other writers have considered the blending of mysticism and philosophy with the complex diction of the Indian Style as the reason for Bedil's late reception among the Iranian people. In their view, such a combination was neither necessary nor is it appealing today. In other words, Bedil's reader was simultaneously faced with two "massifs": one being his philosophy and mysticism, and the other, his poetic technique.

One can refer to the article "*Mohit-e A'zam* and the Indian Style", written by Masuma Ghayori, as an example. From the mentioned article, it can be inferred that one of the reasons for the late or lack of familiarity of Iranians with Bedil is that by fusing elements of mysticism and the philosophy of existential unity (Wahdat-al-Wojud) into the complex diction of the Indian Style which is structurally not receptive to such a fusion, his work cannot simultaneously offer both benefits (the pleasure of beauty and the pleasure of thought) like Rumi's poetry. More simply, his poetry is both technical and intellectual, and this is the fundamental reason for the difficulty of Bedil's poetry and its relative lack of acceptance in Iran. (Ghayori, 1387: 87)

Hasan Husaini, the author of the book "Bedil, Sohrab Sepehri, and the Indian Style", attributes two factors to the delayed familiarity of Iranians with Bedil: an internal cause and an external cause.

Regarding the internal cause, he holds two groups responsible for Bedil's obscurity in Iran. The first consists of academics devoted to the Literary Return period and the second, modernist followers of Nima Youshij. He believes that the first group, on one hand, had no fondness for philosophy and mysticism, and on the other hand, were devoted to composing *Qasidas* and epic poetry [in the Khorasani style]. In his view, this group "constructed and presented the Indian Style as a veritable literary hell in the eyes of their contemporaries". The author's opinion is that,

from this group's perspective, Bedil was doubly guilty; meaning he was both the pinnacle of the Indian Style and had cultivated mysticism and philosophy within it. (Husaini, 1368: 9)

The second group, the modernist followers of Nima, without realizing that Nima's work and his use of natural and indigenous elements to express inner emotions and non-courtly content shared similarities with the works of poets of the Indian Style, sought validation from European modernists to prove Nima's strength and legitimacy. This approach by the modernists provided further justification for the first group's stance and ultimately led both them and others to distance themselves from Bedil and the poets of the Indian Style. (Husaini, 1368: 8-10)

According to Husaini, the external factor behind Bedil's delayed reception in Iran was the lack of sufficient effort by his admirers, scholars, and researchers in India, Pakistan, Central Asian countries, and Afghanistan. He argues that they merely preserved respect for Bedil but failed to introduce him in a manner worthy of his stature. In his view, they relied primarily on biographical introductions and occasionally even put forward strange theories, such as racist interpretations, to explain Bedil's late recognition; an approach that does little to resolve the issue. However, Husaini makes an exception for the works of Salahuddin Seljuqi (a scholar from Afghanistan) in this regard. (Husaini, 1368: 10-13)

Husaini's view regarding the attention paid to European literature by modernist poets is indirectly corroborated in the article "Iqbal's Role in the Recognition of Bedil's Poetry in Iran" by Akhlaq Ahmad Ansari, a professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Persian Center. While introducing Iqbal as an admirer of Bedil's thought and poetry, he identifies the greater attention Iranians paid to Western literature as a significant reason for their delayed familiarity with Bedil, stating: "The main cause for the delay in recognizing Bedil and the poetry of the Indian Style was the Iranians' focus on Western literature due to the political, social, and cultural circumstances of the era" (Ahan, 2025: 13).

As inferred from the above writings, one important reason for the delayed recognition of Bedil in Iran was the complexity of his expression. Although this claim could be one reason for Bedil's obscurity in Iran, as we will see later, this linguistic complexity has, in recent years, become a strength of Bedil's poetry rather than a weakness. Therefore, this claim cannot be accepted in its entirety.

3. 2. The Impact of Iranian Nationalism on the Marginalization of Bedil

Some researchers, including Ali Yusofwand in his article "The Familiar Stranger" (*Āshnā-ye Gharib*), have identified national prejudice or Iranian nationalism before the Islamic Revolution as one of the factors behind Bedil's marginalization in Iran. The aforementioned author believes five factors played a role in Bedil's continued obscurity in Iran, two of which are cited below:

1. The existence of national prejudice and long-standing rivalry or jealousy between Iranian poets and Persian-language poets of India.
2. The disregard and lack of appreciation shown by many researchers of the Pahlavi era towards poets of the Indian Style. (Yusofwand, 1386: 32-36)

The aforementioned author, while recalling the rivalry and jealousy between Iranian and Indian poets, writes that a number of Indian poets were not accepted by the Safavid court due to their non-Iranian origin. On the other hand, since poetry was considered a mark of social superiority in India as well, and Iranian poets accused their Indian counterparts of failing to understand the subtleties of Persian poetry, this jealousy was further intensified.

The author of the mentioned article quotes complaints about the superiority complex of Iranians towards Indians, as written by Munir Lahori in his treatise "*Kārṇāmeḥ*", as follows:

Today, only someone who possesses four qualities finds their speech accepted: old age, fame, wealth, and being Iranian. But I, who am a young, impoverished, obscure man of Indian origin, no one gives my words any value. If an Iranian poet makes a hundred errors in Persian, they are not held against him. One must claim lineage from the land of Khorasan for my poetry to be accepted. If I honestly say that I am from India, these malicious people will raze the very ground of my speech to black dust. (Yusofwand, 1386: 33)

Mohammad Kazem Kazemi, in his article "Bedil: The Great Unknown Poet" also identifies "nationalism" as a very important reason alongside other factors for Bedil's obscurity in Iran. He explains that Bedil, like many other poets who were geographically and culturally distant from Iran and had no connection to Iranians, remained outside the view of the Iranian public.

According to Kazemi, the Iranian people's familiarity with Bedil occurred after the victory of the Islamic Revolution and was promoted by those with a transnational perspective. Kazemi writes: "The nationalism prevalent in Iran before the Islamic Revolution was a major reason for Bedil's obscurity in this country" (Kazemi, 1386: 338).

To support his claim, he cites three pieces of evidence:

1. The first is the obscurity of poets who had no national connection to Iran, among whom Bedil was one.
2. The second is the timing of Iranians' acquaintance with Bedil, meaning that familiarity with him began after the Revolution when nationalist sentiments had weakened.
3. The third is the attention Iranians have paid to poets from outside both the current and historical boundaries of Iran; some of these poets, like Bedil, have already gained recognition, and others will in the future.

Other authors have also confirmed the above point. For example, Ahsan-al-Zafar, an Indian researcher, in his article "*Bedil Scholars*" (*Bedil Shenasan*), citing Majnun Gorakhpuri, one of the leading scholars of the Urdu language, states:

I have heard that now Iranians have also taken notice of Bedil. If this news is true, it is most felicitous, for Iran from the very beginning has been nationalist and patriotic, and until today it has not valued poets born outside Iran, except for Amir Khusro. This is the narrow-mindedness of Iran. Yet I know for certain that in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and even in Russia itself, people openly express their inclination toward Bedil and carry out research on his works. What is his secret? In terms of his era, in terms of his style, he was not a benefactor for a specific group or class of society, but rather a well-wisher of the general public. (Ahsan al-Zafar, 2007: 172)

Elsewhere, the author of the same article, citing Shams al-Ulama Maulana Azad Dehlvi, writes: "The people of Turkistan regard him [Bedil] with the same respect as they do Rumi, because the speech of the common people is based on eloquence, but Iranians do not favor him; because they were not trained by a master capable of guiding them onto the right path" (Ahsan al-Zafar, 2007: 166).

In his book *History of Iranian Literature*, when discussing the Indian Style, Jan Rypka introduces three key figures: Sa'eb Isfahani, Shaukat Bukhari, and Bedil of India. Rypka attributes the primary reason for Bedil's lack of acceptance among Iranians to their intellectual "regression" and "decline", writing: "Bedil found absolutely no favor in Iran because he was

compelled to distance himself completely from the ideas of a country that had fallen into a perpetual state of regression and was on a downward spiral" (Rypka, 1385: 425).

From the statements above, it can be inferred that most non-Iranian researchers consider Iranian nationalism before the Islamic Revolution to be the reason for Bedil's obscurity in Iran. If we consider Bedil's current popularity in Iran, these remarks seem somewhat reasonable. To clarify the issue further, let us review the evolution of Iranian attitudes toward Bedil.

3. Changing Iranian Literary Attitudes Towards Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil

In 2018, Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the President of the Iranian Academy of Persian Language and Literature, made a statement at the fifth "Bedil Urs Congress" held at the Bedil Dehlawi Foundation in Tehran that signaled a shift in Iranian literary attitudes towards Bedil. He said, "We have only recently reconciled with Bedil". This statement indicates that Bedil has finally secured a solid foothold among Iranian cultural figures, literati, and critics.

It is well-known that until 1968, apart from two articles by Shafiei Kadkani, no one had paid significant attention to understanding Bedil's poetry and language. In the eyes of Iranians, Bidel has been a role model that should not be followed. However, this perception gradually began to change. What follows is an overview of this evolving attitude towards Bedil, evident in recent years as a number of Iranian researchers and critics have begun to view him with fresh and different perspectives.

They have written books and articles on the subject and have undertaken translations of relevant books. Notable figures in this regard include Shafiei Kadkani, Mahmoud Fotouhi, Hasan Husaini, Javad Mehriani, Tawfiq Sobhani (translator of a book on Abdul-Qadir Bedil), Akbar Behdarwand, Yusefali Mirshakkak, Farid Moradi, and others.

1.3. The Contribution of Shafiei Kadkani to the Development of Contemporary Bedil Studies in Iran

The first person to take crucial steps in fostering an understanding of Bedil in Iran was Shafiei Kadkani (born 1939). He published a selection of Bedil's Ghazals and Quatrains (Robaiyat), accompanied by several articles on Bedil in a work titled "*The Poet of Mirrors*" (*Shā'er-e Āyinehā*). In the introduction to this very work, Kadkani states:

When I referred to the valuable book *A Bibliography of Persian Articles* by the esteemed Iraj Afshar, I realized that the first articles about Bedil in Iranian publications were those two articles by this author, and after that, no more than one or two other articles were published and those were by Afghan literati. (Shafiei Kadkani, 1389: 14)

As can be inferred from the book's introduction, Shafiei Kadkani had not initially intended to compile such a work; it happened rather by chance. He wrote the article "Bedil Dehlawi" at the request of the editor of the journal *Honar o Mardom* (1968) and the article "A Critique of Bedil" for the journal *Rahnemaye Ketab* (Shafiei Kadkani, 1968: 268-272).

When he sought to introduce the literary milieu of Transoxiana to Iranian readers, he wrote the article "Hafez and Bedil in the Literary Environment of Transoxiana". Furthermore, while translating Professor Bečka's work "*Literatura Tadžyczna od XVI wieku do dnia dzisiejszego*" (Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present Day), he included a section of that translation under the title "Bedil and His Followers" in the book. He also combined his "Stylistics of Bedil's Poetry" from his own then-unpublished work (*The Style of Persian Poetry*)

with the aforementioned articles. He then brought all these together with a selection of Bedil's Ghazals and Quatrains to create the book "*The Poet of Mirrors*".

If we consider the subsequent impact of this book itself on the understanding and introduction of Bedil within Iran's literary circles, it becomes clear that even if this work was accidental, it was a fortunate and propitious accident.

Although in his article "Bedil Dehlawi", he had considered Bedil's lack of success as a cautionary lesson for young poets, advising them to avoid that style, he later, after further study of Bedil's Ghazals, described Bedil's poetry as a "realm" not accessible to just anyone. As he himself stated, the impetus for his acquaintance with Bedil came from Mohammad Qahraman and a poet named "Sahy".

In the introduction to his book *The Poet of Mirrors*, he wrote that one year before the book's publication, while at the home of his poet friend Mohammad Qahraman, a gathering place for literary companions in Khorasan, the conversation turned to Bedil. A poet named "Sahy" (Zabihollah Sahebkhari), who composed poetry in Sa'eb's style, had also prepared a selection of Bedil's ghazals. Sahy gave this collection to Shafiei Kadkani, asking him to write an introduction for publishing. This task led Kadkani to read Bedil's complete Diwan (collection of poetry) multiple times and compile his own selections, which he published a year later in the book *The Poet of Mirrors*.

After repeatedly studying Bedil's complete works, Shafiei Kadkani described Bedil's poetry as "a new architecture with its own unique geometry" and added:

"Bedil is a country for which obtaining a travel visa is not easily granted, and it does not permit entry to just anyone. However, if someone does secure this visa, they will apply for permanent residency". (Shafiei Kadkani, 1389: 9)

Shafiei Kadkani's interest in Bedil grew to such an extent that he later dedicated a 25-verse ode titled "A Message to Bedil's Urs" to Mohammad Kazem Kazemi (an Afghan researcher), calling Bedil "a heaven on earth" In the final verse, he admits that this "praise" came after his earlier "criticism", acknowledging that Bedil is worthy of admiration. The opening and closing verses of this famous ode are presented here:

A Message to Bedil's Urs

My message to Bedil's Urs is this:

That Bedil is a heaven on earth.

I praised you after such critique;

Such praise is worthy of creation. (Shafiei Kadkani, 1397)

Shafiei Kadkani's work was highly significant for two main reasons: First, his effort to introduce Bedil's poetic style and demonstrate his literary status in Transoxiana, where he was elevated to the level of a prophet (Nazari, 1385: 203), while he remained obscure and unfamiliar in Iran, confronted Iranian scholars and poets with a critical question: Who is this Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, who is so revered in Afghanistan and Transoxiana? This was the most significant jolt to the Iranian literary world following the publication of *The Poet of Mirrors*, compelling Iranian scholars, who considered themselves the ultimate authorities on Persian literature, to turn their attention to Bedil.

The more subtle point in his work is that in his article "Bedil Dehlawi", published nineteen years before *The Poet of Mirrors*, he had discouraged readers from emulating Bedil's style. However, when he adopted a new approach toward Bedil, it prompted the Iranian literary community to reassess their beliefs about Bedil and revisit his works.

The second noteworthy point is that the selection of Ghazals and Quatrains made by Shafiei Kadkani was exceptionally appropriate and well-suited to the literary climate of that time. Kadkani meticulously curated beautiful Ghazals from among Bedil's approximately three thousand such poems and then further refined his selection by choosing the best verses from within each ghazal, omitting those he found less appealing.

Consequently, readers encountered ghazals that were not only artistically refined and offered a fresh perspective on the world but were also not convoluted or nonsensical, as they had previously heard. In this manner, his book was quickly embraced and had reached its ninth printing by 2010.

2.3. The Contribution of Hasan Husaini in the Development of Contemporary Bedil Studies in Iran

The second work dedicated specifically and more precisely to introducing Bedil was the book "*Bedil, Sepehri, and the Indian Style*", published by Hasan Husaini in 1988, one year after the publication of "*The Poet of Mirrors*". This book served both as a protest against Bedil's marginalization in Iran and as a robust response to those who persistently spoke of the "false obscurity" of Bedil and the Indian Style, repeatedly citing verses they believed proved the meaninglessness of Bedil's poetry.

Hasan Husaini dedicated this book to the soul of his friend, Salman Harati (from Afghanistan), and began it by quoting this passage from "*Naqd-e Bedil*" (The Critique of Bedil) by Allama Salahuddin Saljuqi (an Afghan researcher):

It is difficult to expect the sound of a blacksmith's hammer forging steel to be as soft and melodious as that of a goldsmith's. On one hand, these themes are complex, and on the other, our dear readers have been made accustomed to poor standards by the 'green and yellow fairy' and 'Amir Hamzas' of outdated, as well as by new, vulgar novels. Many gentlemen buy books from bookstores with the intention that they should act like two sleeping pills at bedtime, but a pill that is sweet, with no apparent taste, smell, or color of medicine" (Husaini, 1368: Introduction).

This work influenced the introduction of Bedil in Iran in various ways and even went a step further than Shafiei Kadkani's efforts. Firstly, the author of this book deliberately sought out Bedil and compared him with a renowned contemporary Iranian poet (Sohrab Sepehri), masterfully demonstrating Bedil's influence on Sepehri's diction. This approach captured the attention of Sohrab Sepehri's admirers, who were numerous at the time and more broadly, readers of modern poetry, making them aware of the subtleties that the Indian Style and particularly Bedil's style, had imparted to major contemporary poets, including Sepehri.

Husaini's realistic approach, supported by solid arguments regarding the Indian Style and Bedil, made that seemingly insurmountable and difficult peak of the Indian Style appear accessible and engaging to his readers. Therefore, his work was highly significant in this regard. Another major contribution of Husaini in "*Bedil, the Indian Style, and Sepehri*" was his elucidation of the subtleties of the Indian Style using clear examples.

Furthermore, Husaini began by addressing the causes and reasons for Bedil's marginalization in Iran, categorizing them as internal and external. In the section on external causes, he expressed criticism towards scholars from Afghanistan, Central Asia and Pakistan for failing to introduce

Bedil to Iranians in a manner worthy of his stature. However, the dedication of the book to Salman Harati and the quotation from the work of Salahuddin Seljuqi, an Afghan author, as the gateway into this work, indicates that the aforementioned author was indebted to Afghan scholars for his own acquaintance with Bedil.

3.3. The Contribution of Mohammad Kazem Kazemi in the Development of Contemporary Bedil Studies in Iran

One of the most important and influential researchers who has worked and continues to work vigorously to introduce Bedil in Iran is Mohammad Kazem Kazemi (born 1967 in Herat, Afghanistan, now residing in Iran). He has undertaken significant work in presenting Bedil's writings.

He initially published a series of explanations of Bedil's Ghazals in the Iranian quarterly journal "*She'r*" under the title "Step by Step with a Ghazal by Bedil". He would select Ghazals that appeared difficult on the surface and, by referencing other verses from Bedil's Divan, unravel their linguistic techniques and literary devices. He also compiled a selection of Bedil's ghazals, publishing "*A Selection of Bedil's Ghazals*" in 2006. This book was well-received and reprinted in 2009.

Kazemi's most important work in this field is "*The Key to the Open Door*" (*Kelid-e Dar-e Baz*). It consists of two interconnected parts. In the first part, he discusses the ambiguity and difficulties of Bedil's poetry in detail, using simple and clear language. In the second part, he provides a detailed commentary on thirteen of Bedil's Ghazals.

Kazemi's mastery of Bedil's language and poetry, combined with his deep familiarity with the Afghan literary tradition and the specific compounds and vocabulary Bedil used which might be challenging for Iranian Persian speakers on one hand, and the methodical and accessible nature of his work on the other, have made this book unique in its own right.

In addition to these works, Kazemi continuously explains Bedil's verses through his blog, Instagram account, and official website under titles like "Today with Bedil" or "An Evening with Bedil" which has been highly beneficial in introducing Bedil to Iranian audiences. He has also compiled a collection of Bedil's Ghazals sung by the renowned Ustad Mohammad-Husain Sar-Ahang and made them available on his website.

Kazemi has been influential both within the literary circles of Afghanistan and has played the role of a knowledgeable ambassador for Bedil in Iran. He also authored an article titled "Bedil: The Great Unknown Poet" in issues 39 and 40 of the journal *Qand-e Parsi* in 2007, where he discussed the significant factors behind Bedil's marginalization in Iran.

4.3. The Contribution of Other Scholars in the Development of Contemporary Bedil Studies in Iran

The contributions of the three individuals mentioned above have been immensely valuable in introducing Bedil to contemporary Iran, for the reasons already stated. However, there have been other poets connected to Bedil as well. Among them, Ali Moallem Damghani (born 1951) was perhaps the first to mention Bedil in his own poetry, acknowledging his debt to him with this verse:

"None has prevailed over the art of speech, as me the "Moallem" have,

save those who have partaken humbly of the crumbs from 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdil's feast of words" (Ahsan-al-Zafar, 1368: 168).

Furthermore, Yousofali Mir-Shakkak, due to his admiration and respect for Ali Moallem, also developed an interest in Bedil. Between 1980 and 1981, he wrote articles about Bedil in the cultural supplement of the *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* newspaper (Ahsan-al-Zafar, 1386: 168).

In recent years, more researchers have turned their attention to Bedil's works. His complete works (*Kolliyat*) have been reprinted multiple times. Notable efforts in this regard include those of Mehrdad Awesta, Mokhtar Ismailzadeh, and Farid Moradi, who published the Diwan of Bedil in Iran based on the Kabul edition prepared by Khal Mohammad Khasta and Khalilullah Khalili, adding their own introductions and commentaries to it.

Akbar Behdarwand has also undertaken significant work in this field, notably the publication of Bedil's Complete Works (*Kolliyat*). He prepared a comparative critical edition based on the Kabul and Bombay manuscripts, categorizing Bedil's works and publishing them in separate volumes. He published Bedil's prose works under the title "Avaz-ha-ye Bedil" (Bedil's Voices), his Masnavis as "Sho'la-ye Avaz" (The Flame of Voice), his Quatrains in a separate volume under their original title "Robai'yat-e Bedil" and his Ghazals in another distinct volume.

While Behdarwand's editorial work is commendable in its own right, his edition suffers from editorial issues, likely resulting from either insufficient diligence, haste, or a lack of deep familiarity with Bedil's style and language. He also took liberties with Bedil's Quatrains by assigning each one a title based on his own preference. These titles are often imprecise and fail to adequately capture the meaning of the corresponding Quatrain. Such titles are not present in the Kabul manuscript, and it is probable that Bedil himself did not assign titles to his individual Quatrains. The criteria and motivation behind this editor's choice of titles for the quatrains remain questionable.

It is evident that without access to a poet's works, a genuine understanding of them is impossible. The widespread publication of Bedil's works, alongside other research, facilitated his emergence from obscurity and succeeded in attracting the attention of Iran's literary circles.

5.3. The Reconciliation of Iranians with Bidil

In this manner, Bedil gradually found his place among Iranians. His works were published and distributed by numerous publishers. Commemorative ceremonies (*Urs*) for Bedil were held, and in 2016, the Bedil Dehlawi Foundation was officially inaugurated and began its work. The official website of the Bedil Dehlawi Foundation states that "Bedil is a poet of truth and justice, a herald of humanity's liberation from the shackles of negligence and hardship; a great poet whose central theme in both his quatrains and ghazals is monotheism, the elevation of human stature, and a call to innate nature and virtue" Elaborating on the importance of Bedil's poetry and the contemporary need for his voice, the Foundation adds: "Many thinkers believe that if Bedil's poetry is correctly understood, contemporary poetry will undoubtedly experience a renaissance, which would be a monumental event in Persian poetry and literature".

On July 5th, 2018, the fifth International Bedil Urs Congress was launched by this same foundation for two days in the hall of Iran's Ministry of Interior, featuring invited guests from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and other countries. At this congress, Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, the President of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature, said the following regarding the Iranians' reconciliation with Bedil:

Bedil has been introduced to the people of Iran over the past 40 years. We Iranians have only recently reconciled with Bedil and are at the very beginning of Bedil studies. Understanding Bedil is difficult, but it is as pleasurable as it is challenging. Bedil composed approximately 100,000 couplets of poetry, and regarding him, I must say: 'You appeared with a hundred thousand splendors, so that I / Might behold you with a hundred thousand eyes (Adel, 2018).

4. Conclusion

An examination of the historical trajectory of Iranians' perception of Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bedil reveals that his obscurity and marginalization in Iran stemmed less from the linguistic or philosophical complexity of his poetry and more from socio-cultural factors, particularly rooted in the discourse of cultural nationalism prevalent in Iran before the Islamic Revolution. While geographical distance, a scarcity of resources, and the challenging nature of the Indian Style contributed to this neglect, the gradual decline of nationalist discourse and the resurgence of a transnational approach to Persian heritage eventually neutralized these barriers.

From the 1960s onwards, the entry of scholars such as Shafiei Kadkani, Hasan Husaini, and Mohammad Kazem Kazemi initiated a fresh reinterpretation of Bedil. This not only led to a reconciliation between Iranians and his work but also fostered a new understanding of the civilizational continuity within the Persian-speaking world. This shift can be seen as an instance of "cultural return" in the realm of literature, demonstrating that Iranian literary identity is being redefined through interaction with other Persian-speaking spheres.

Accordingly, contemporary Bedil studies in Iran can be viewed not merely as a literary movement but as a cultural and civilizational process. In this process, Bedil's poetry acts as a bridge connecting Iran, Afghanistan, India, and Central Asia. This trajectory could also serve as a model for re-evaluating other transnational poets such as Amir Khosrow Dehlawi and Ghalib Dehlawi.

In conclusion, the "reconciliation with Bedil" symbolizes a move beyond the narrow confines of literary nationalism and a return to a broader cultural self-awareness within the Persian domain.

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ⁱ A portion of this conversation is available at the following link: <https://www.etilaatroz.com/100581/maulana-and-biddles-guard-memories-of-masnavi-reading-and-biddle-reading-heydari-vojodi/>