

N. G. McBurney  
*early printing & manuscripts  
of the Islamic world*

Urdu & Persian  
literature  
from India  
*a short-title catalogue*

2024



*This is an experiment with briefer cataloging as sneak preview, given the snail's pace at which I generally issue lists. All are in modern bindings, illustrated, which are broadly uniform. The overall condition is pleasing to the point that I was pleasantly surprised when cataloging, with faults as illustrated and described.*

*None of these editions are common - some are true rarities.*

*Questions and comments are always welcome.*



1. 'Inayat Allah. **Bahar-i Danish**. [Lucknow], Matba ' Mustafa-i, Ramadan 1262 AH (August/September 1846 CE).

4to; pp.[1]-316. On a good quality cream paper, perhaps Indian. Contemporary blank paper wrappers bound in. A fresh copy.

£2,200

[images](#)

A Persian romance by 'Inayat Allah, the 17th-century Mughal author, enormously popular in manuscript, in a rare and early lithographed edition from one of the first private presses in Lucknow. The eponymous Mustafa-i was established by Muhammad Mustafa Khan, a wealthy merchant, in 1839. Some sense of his sensibilities is suggested by the inclusion of seven different chronograms for the date of printing and an elaborately printed colophon-poem at the end, together with the unusually fine paper on which this edition was lithographed. The elegantly composed title-page is dated 1261 AH but 1262 AH is used throughout the colophon text.

I have located no other complete copies of this edition: the British Library holds a substantially defective lithographed copy of the *Bahar-i Danish* which may be another example, shelfmark OIOC 306.23.E.8.



2. Ferdowsi. **Shahnamah Urdu**. [Lucknow], Matba ' Munshi Naval Kishor, (not earlier than 1877 CE and unlikely to be much later than 1885).

8vo; pp.[1]-196 (defective). Stained with a few tears.

£750

[images](#)

Extensively illustrated but defective early Urdu edition of the *Shahnameh*. Seal impression with the name of Ram Kashan, dated 1877, on margin of p.101. The first illustrated Urdu edition of the *Shahnama* was published by Naval Kishor in 1872.



3. Zafar, Bahadur Shah II. **Kulliyat-i Zafar**. Lucknow [but printed in Cawnpore], Matba ' Munshi Naval Kishor, 1304 AH (1886/7 CE).

4 parts bound as one, 4to; pp.[1]-394; [1]-198; [1]-196; [1]-244; each part with separate title-page. Printed on thin wove paper, browned. Partially unopened, most noticeably in Part IV, with the odd short marginal tear. Contemporary purple card wrapper bound in at rear.

£1,400

[images](#)

The collected Urdu & Persian poetry of Zafar, pen-name of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II (1775-1862), rare in any early edition. The earliest edition of the *Kulliyat* which I have traced was published by the Ahmadi Press in the vicinity of Delhi in the year the emperor died, deposed and exiled. I locate a single copy of the 1862 edition at Oxford. The first Naval Kishor edition was only published in 1869-70. The present edition includes a detailed printer's colophon (Part III, p.196), which states that it was printed in Cawnpore and identifies the copyist and others responsible for the production of the book by name.



4. Sa 'di. **Gulistan ba tasvir**. Lucknow, Matba ' Munshi Naval Kishor, April 1889 CE. 4to; pp.[1]-256. Original printed pictorial wrappers bound in.

SOLD

[images](#)

A rare example of an enormously popular and correspondingly common Persian text, the *Gulistan*, with so many vigorous illustrations that an almost 2:1 ratio of text to image is maintained throughout. The printed wrappers are exquisite: a title in red surrounded by beautifully rendered oak leaves at the front and an architectural vignette of Lucknow surmounting news of the press at rear. I have never handled anything from this press to compare.



5. Sa 'di. **Gulistan ba tasvir**. [Lucknow, Matba ' Munshi Naval Kishor, circa 1889 CE.]

4to; pp.[1]-2 (supplied from a different book printed by the same press), 3-256. Defective: lacking pp.1-2. Text block trimmed, touching printed marginal notes.

£400

[images](#)

As above but defective, or complete with all illustrations albeit lacking title and opening page, depending on your perspective: priced accordingly.



6. Mehdi Hassan Ahsan, *Munshi*. **Khun-i nahaq**. Bombay, Matba ' Mustafa-i, 189[9] CE (partially trimmed date on wrapper).

8vo; pp.[1]-65. Original printed red wrappers bound in, pagination includes inner rear wrapper. SOLD

[images](#)

Rare. The first adaptation of Hamlet into Urdu, translated in 1896/7 under the title of *Jahangir* and first staged by a Lucknow theatrical company, which collapsed. Its interim manager, Cowasji Palanji Khatau, transferred the play to Bombay with a new-founded company, and staged it under the present title in 1898, complete, unusually, with tragic ending, cutting against the convention for happy endings on the Parsi stage. The play was an enormous success, with productions continuing well into the 20th century.

This must be one of its earliest appearances in print - the usual date given for first publication is 1900. For a more detailed discussion of this translation and its early production history see Javed Malick's *Diverse Pursuits* (2001), pp.99 and 105.



7. 'Attar, Farid al-Din, *Shaykh*. **Panchi-namah**. Bombay, Matba 'Muhammadi, undated (but circa 1900).

8vo; pp.[1]-110. Bound with printed card wrapper at rear. Worm traces, text unaffected.  
£350

[images](#)

An Urdu translation of selections from 'Attar's *Mantiq al-tayr* (*Conference of the Birds*), with a printed publisher's title list on the wrapper at rear. This selection was in wide popular circulation with multiple Urdu editions.



8. Ferdowsi. **Shahnamah Urdu**. Lucknow, Matba 'Munshi Naval Kishor, December 1908.

4to; pp.[1]-180. Original printed pink wrappers bound in. Long tear affecting pp.33-4.  
SOLD

[images](#)

An illustrated Urdu *Shahnameh* from the press of Naval Kishor, who first published an illustrated Urdu version of the epic in 1872 - the early 20th-century cycle of illustrations is coarser than the press's 19th-century editions but suggests an enduring popular interest in the text. The printed and paginated pink wrappers include a 3-page book list, priced, of tales.



9. 'Attar, Farid al-Din, *Shaykh*. **Pandnamah**. Lahore, Matba 'Mufid-i-Am, 1327 AH (1909 CE).

Small 4to; pp.[1]-64. Paper browned.  
£450

[images](#)

An Urdu translation of the *Pandnameh*, Persian moralising verses attributed to the medieval Sufi and poet 'Attar, from the press founded by Munshi Gulab Singh some thirty-odd years before.



10. Mir Amman Dihlavi. **Bagh o bahar**. Lucknow, Matba 'Munshi Naval Kishor, April 1920 CE.

Small 4to; pp.[1]-139, [1, blank]. Paper browned. Partially unopened, a few tears, without loss of text. Original printed and paginated wrappers bound in.

£600

[images](#)

An illustrated edition of *Bagh o Bahar*, the title apparent nonsense but a chronogram for the composition date of this tale of four dervishes, displaying the enduring popularity of a landmark in Urdu prose, first composed and published under the auspices of the British establishment of Fort William, Calcutta, more than a century earlier, in 1802/3 CE. The author's preface alone provides an unreliable but fascinating linguistic survey of Urdu: the text served both as a didactic text for colonial officials and a popular vernacular tale, in parallel but related textual lives. This edition represents the latter - and the original printed wrappers with their book list show how an entire genre of tales was fed by this one literary wellspring.

