

BASHSHÂR BIN BURD : A GENIUS BLIND POET OF THE ABBASID PERIOD**Dr. Noor Uddin Ahmed**

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Abstract

The Abbasid period, spanning from 750 to 1258 A.D., was a remarkable era marked by the prolific development of poetry and various dimensions of literary works. While numerous poets adorned this period with their eloquent verses, a select few among them were poets with visual impairments. Bashshâr ibn Burd stands out as one such notable figure, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of Abbasid poetry. This paper aims to shed light on the significant contributions of Bashshâr ibn Burd to the domain of Arabic poetry literature during the Abbasid period.

Despite his visual impairment, Bashshâr ibn Burd emerged as a vital and influential figure in the domain of Abbasid poetry. This study delves into his life and poetic achievements, recognizing his profound impact on the realm of Arabic literature. Through a thorough examination of primary and secondary sources, including classical Arabic poetry collections and historical accounts, we uncover the distinctive literary style, recurring themes, characteristics and cultural context that shaped his poetry.

Keywords: Abbasid period, Blind poet, Arabic literature, Poetry, Genius, Cultural contributions etc.

Introduction:

Bashshâr ibn Burd was born in 714 in the desert of Basra, belonged to Bani 'Aqîl tribe. He also grew up and educated in the jurisdiction of his motherland, and after that he moved to Baghdad, where he lived for about seventy years before he was killed by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi after he accused him of heresy. Very few of his poetic verses have reached us, which is contrary to what Bashshâr narrated about himself, where he said that he recited more than twelve thousand poems.

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Bashshâr ibn Burd, a visually impaired poet belonged to Persia was one of the earliest proponent of poetic new style. According to the views of Philip K. Hitti, the blind poet Bashshâr was given a sentence by the Caliph al-Mahdi for an allegation that he satirized his minister or he might have philosophical relation with zindiqism (heresy). Under this verdict, Bashshâr was beaten with seventy whips and succumbed to death in 783.²

As a prominent poet, he straddled both the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, earning him recognition as a transitional figure in Arab literary history. Some Arab critics have designated him as *mukhadram al-dawlatayn*, signifying his unique position in navigating the literary landscape during the transition from the Umayyad to the Abbasid dynasties.

Among Arab scholars, Bashshâr ibn Burd is often hailed as the pioneer of "modern" poetry, a distinction that places him at the forefront of a literary movement that introduced innovative genres into Arabic poetry. His influence was so profound that it led to the fragmentation of the traditional Arabic *qaṣīda* (ode), giving rise to the cultivation of independent poetic forms.

In fact, Bashshâr ibn Burd took upon himself the task of further developing and refining genres that were already prevalent in his era and within his cultural milieu. His contributions extended beyond mere preservation; he played a pivotal role in shaping the evolving landscape of Arabic poetry.

It is worth-noting that some historical accounts have accused Bashshâr of *zandaqah* (heresy), but a careful examination of his *dîwân* (collected poems) reveals no substantial evidence to support such allegations. However, Bashshâr was undeniably a proponent of the Shu‘ûbî movement. In his poems, he frequently juxtaposed the illustrious past of the Persians against what he perceived as the bedouins’ lack of cultural refinement, thus exemplifying his alignment with the Shu‘ûbî ideology.³

It is crucial to acknowledge that Bashshâr ibn Burd, the esteemed visually impaired poet, stands as one of the pioneering figures in the realm of Arabic literature specifically relating to *‘ilm al-badî‘*, which is known as “the art or science the science of metaphors and (in general) of good style”.⁴ His influence on subsequent generations of poets is widely recognized and his credit turned on excellent approaches. It is a notable factor that Bashshâr's Persian heritage adds a unique dimension to his literary identity. His grandfather, originally a captive, found his way to Iraq, while his father attained the status of a freedman (Mawla) within the Uqayl tribe.⁵

Bashshâr ibn Burd's significance in the literary landscape lies in his instrumental role in shaping and refining various poetic features. These include the adept use of metaphors, clever puns, juxtaposition of opposites, and intricate theological allusions. These complexities, introduced and honed by Bashshâr, set a high bar for later poets, compelling them to strive for greater heights in the realm of literary culture.

The art of poetic brinkmanship, encapsulated by the *‘ilm al-badî‘*, as cultivated by Bashshâr ibn Burd and fellow scholar Ibn Miskawayh, brought a certain formality to poetic art. Their contributions paved the way for a more structured and sophisticated approach to poetic expression, elevating the craft of poetry in the Arabic literary tradition.⁶

Description:

Bashshâr ibn Burd, renowned for his poetic prowess, bore the epithet *al-Mura‘ath*, a moniker bestowed upon him in his formative years owing to his customary adorning of earrings. The term *ri‘âth* signifies the plural form of *ra‘tha*, connoting earrings. Remarkably, Bashshâr exhibited a distinctive proclivity for wearing earrings in both of his ears.

The poet Bashshâr’s lineage traced its roots to Ṭukhâristân, nestled in the heart of Persia. His father, a captive of al-Muhallab ibn Abî Ṣufrah, was among those who journeyed from distant lands to call Basra home. Born in Basra, Bashshâr emerged from humble beginnings, hailing from a lineage of servitude to a woman of the ‘Uqayl tribe. Consequently, he earned the additional appellation of *‘Uqaylî*.⁷

The historian Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat provides valuable insights into the life and persona of Bashshâr ibn Burd, he was also known as Abû Mu‘âdh, and During his youth, he displayed an avid interest in mastering eloquent language and precise speech. Consequently, he acquired impeccable pronunciation and a profound understanding of linguistic nuances. His proficiency in

language was so exceptional that he often engaged in debates with grammarians, demonstrating his profound grasp of poetry.

As he matured, Bashshâr turned his poetic talents towards praising the caliphs and military commanders of his time. Despite his poetic prowess, he became known for his satirical verses about women, which eventually brought about his downfall. The veil of modesty was lifted, exposing his controversial writings, and society reacted by seeking retribution. Concerned with safeguarding the chastity of women and protecting the honour of secluded girls, people hoped for his demise.

In this context, Malik bin Dinar, another poet of the era, expressed the sentiments of the time. Bashshâr's life was a complex interplay of linguistic mastery, poetic acclaim, satire, and societal expectations, leaving a lasting legacy in the annals of Arabic literature.

“The poems composed by this unorthodox blind poet presented an unprecedented challenge to the moral values of the city's residents.”⁸

Historical records indicate an intriguing incident involving a group of impassioned individuals who approached the esteemed Caliph al-Mahdi. They entreated him to listen to the love poetry of Bashshâr bin Burd, asserting that such verses possessed the remarkable ability to sway hearts and soften even the most calloused ones. In response to this plea, the Caliph issued a stern decree, solemnly swearing, “By Allah, if you ever again utter a single couplet aimed at wooing a woman, I shall swiftly end your life.”⁹

Following this stern warning from the Caliph, Bashshâr bin Burd found himself in a predicament. Whenever he was urged to compose love poems, he would vividly recall the Caliph's strict prohibition. Instead, he chose to share stories of women's amusements and conversations.

However, as time passed, it became evident that Bashshâr grew increasingly audacious, ignoring the Caliph al-Mahdi's ban and showing little regard for the concerns of the people. News of his audacious behaviour eventually reached the Caliph's ears a second time. Interestingly, during this period, Bashshâr continued to speak highly of Caliph al-Mahdi. Miraculously, he managed to escape any form of punishment despite this apparent contradiction.

Nonetheless, Bashshâr's blatant disregard for the Caliph's ban persisted, and he even dared to compose a satirical piece targeting the Caliph himself. When word of this audacious act reached Caliph al-Mahdi, he promptly summoned the chief of the police and issued a decisive order to punish Bashshâr with a thorough lashing.

In response to the Caliph's command, Bashshâr endured a severe flogging. Tragically, this punishment proved to be his undoing, and he succumbed to his detrimental injuries in the year 784 A.D. At the time of his demise, Bashshâr had lived for over seventy years.¹⁰

Bashshâr ibn Burd was a remarkable figure in Islamic history. He was born blind, and by accounts, he was considered unattractive in appearance. Despite these challenges, Bashshâr's early years were nurtured within the rich cultural milieu of Basra, allowing his poetic talents to blossom at a young age.

However, Bashshâr's poetic endeavours were not without controversy. He found himself at odds with some prominent religious figures, including Malik ibn Dinar and al-Hasan al-Basri,

who condemned his poetry for its perceived licentiousness. Bashshâr engaged in poetic exchanges, known as *hijâ'*, with several fellow poets. He was also notable for his opposition to the Mu‘tazili school of Islamic thought, particularly criticizing its founder, Wasil ibn ‘Atâ’(d. 748 AD).

In 762 AD, after the construction of Baghdad by the Abbasids, Bashshâr relocated from Basra to this bustling city. It was in Baghdad that he became associated with the Caliph al-Mahdî. However, due to his libertine tendencies and disregard for authority, the Caliph imposed a strict ban on Bashshâr, prohibiting him from composing any love poetry. This prohibition was quickly violated, leading to dire consequences for Bashshâr.

He faced charges of heresy and zindiqism, was subsequently imprisoned, and subjected to severe beatings that ultimately resulted in his death. To conceal his remains, his body was cast into the waters of the Tigris River.

Bashshâr's literary legacy is characterized by a blend of traditional *hijâ'* (satires) and *fakhr* (glorification). In his glorification poetry, he expressed strong Shu‘ubi sentiments, proudly highlighting the achievements of his Persian ancestors while denigrating the "uncivilized Arabs." It is worthy of mention that Bashshâr's sentiments extended to his religious preferences. In a couplet (in Arabic, it is known as *bayt*), he subjectively celebrated Zoroastrianism, the religion of his Persian forebears, over Islam, suggesting a preference for prostration (*Sajdah*) before fire (associated with Satan's origin) instead of soil (linked to Adam's origin). In fine, Bashshâr's unorthodox beliefs and actions led to his condemnation as a heretic, culminating in his execution at the hands of Caliph al-Mahdi.¹¹

Regarding Bashshâr ibn Burd's religious faith, Wasil bin ‘Atâ’ was confirmed about his heresy; because his following Arabic verse gives a better testimony thereof:

al-arḍ muzlima wa al-nâr mushriqa

*wa al-nâr Ma‘buda mudh kânat al-nâr.*¹²

(The Earth is dark, and Fire is brilliant;

Ever since it has existed men have worshipped it.)

In fact, Wasil bin ‘Atâ’ was compelled to issue the following statement concerning “the individual identified as the blind and fervent heretic was surnamed as Abu Mu‘âdh. There arose a significant query regarding the party accountable for his demise. I earnestly affirm by the name of Allah that, were it not for the sacredness of human life, one might have contemplated sending someone to confront him, forcibly opening his abdomen, and executing him within the confines of his own dwelling.”¹³

From historical accounts, it is evident that Bashshâr ibn Burd praised Al-Mahdî bin Al-Mansur (d. 785 A.D.), the Commander of the Faithful, which led to accusations of heresy against him. Consequently, he was ordered to be severely beaten, enduring seventy lashes, resulting in his demise in Al-Batiha near Basra at the age of ninety. May God have mercy on him.

It is recorded that Bashshâr bin Burd had a preference for fire over the earth and notably defended the opinion of Iblîs (the Great Devil) in his refusal to prostrate to Adam, may God's prayers and peace be upon him. He expressed this preference for fire over the earth poetically, as in his verse: "The earth is dark, and fire is bright...", emphasizing the veneration of fire since ancient times.

It is also reported that Bashshâr ibn Burd authored books in which he addressed various topics, and none of the accusations levelled against him were substantiated in his writings. However, one of his books attracted attention due to its intention to satirize the family of Suleiman bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Al-Abbas - may God be pleased with them.¹⁴

His position in Arabic Poetry:

Bashshâr bin Burd's poetic talent blossomed at the tender age of ten, and as he matured, his name and fame spread far and wide. It is reported that whenever Bashshâr bin Burd met Jarîr, he refrained from satirizing him. However, Jarîr considered him insignificant and turned away from him. In response, Bashshâr bin Burd commented that had Jarîr responded to his satire, he would have proven himself the superior poet. His initial foray into poetry primarily revolved around satire (*hijâ'*), a skill cultivated from his early childhood. He delved into every facet of poetry that had come before him.

Moreover, it is no exaggeration to assert that he brought innovation to the realm of Arabic poetry akin to modern artistic style. Transmitters and poetry critics unanimously acknowledge Bashshâr ibn Burd as the leader among postclassical poets (*tabqa al-Muwalladîn*), excelling in both obscene impudence and delicate love lyrics. His poetry seamlessly blended the styles of desert nomads and refined civilization, occupying a middle ground between ancient and contemporary poetry. His position among postclassical poets can be likened to that of Imrul Qais among nomadic poets and al-Bârûdî among modern poets.

Furthermore, al-Asma'î compared him to poets like al-A'shâ and al-Nâbigha due to the flawless quality of his poetry and its freedom from complexities and unfamiliar themes. The renowned scholar Jâhiz also commented on him as follows:

*"Bashshâr ibn Burd was a refined orator known for his impeccable manners. He possessed the ability to craft composed prose, masterfully employ double entendre, skilfully utilize rhyme, and create eloquent letters. He stands out as one of the writers endowed with creativity and innovation, particularly excelling in the realm of poetry. His expertise spanned across various genres and types within poetry, making him a versatile and accomplished poet."*¹⁵

Features of Bashshâr bin Burd's poetry:

1. Bashar bin Burd's poetry was a mixture of ancient and modern, and it was also a mixture of wisdom and humour, and he also worked to preserve the integrated environment of poetic verses.
2. Bashar bin Burad's poetry was characterized by simplicity, sophistication, and skilful artistic depiction, all of this despite his loss of sight, as he used to describe events in a very accurate and realistic manner that many sighted people cannot.

3. In his poetic verses, Bashâr used words that were very close to people, using easy, simple, and uncomplicated phrases or words, as his poems relied heavily and directly on the element of surprise and the depth of ideas.
4. Although in some of his poetic verses he mentioned the various pillars of Islam, in some of his verses or his flirtatious poems, it was very frank and clear, due to his extreme debauchery and shamelessness.
5. He also used satire in his verses and poems in an exaggerated manner, as he used it to take revenge on someone who had personal accounts between them, and used satire in this case to settle these differences and personal accounts.
6. Sometimes he used satire in order to make money from it, i.e. for his own benefit.¹⁶

Beliefs of the poet Bashshâr bin Burd:

It is indicated earlier that Bashshâr used to glorify and brag about his Persian origins very much, which led to some people accusing him of disbelief and atheism, and others accused him of heresy, because he was exaggerating this glorification in a clear, frank and very great way.

In the beginning, Bashshâr ibn Burd used to sit with Wâsil bin 'Atâ', who was the sheikh of the Mu'tazila at that time, because he attended all the discussion sessions with those who embraced Magianism, secularism, and Hinduism.

There are those who said that he was a Muslim, and this was very clear in many of his poems, in which he mentioned some of the pillars of Islam, such as Hajj, prayer, and fasting as well.

There were many people who plotted against him, hated him, and attributed qualities to him that he did not have, because he was a lot of mocker, and this was clearly in the form of sarcasm and stardom.¹⁷

Characteristics of Bashshâr's poetry:

It appears from the contents of Bashshâr ibn Burd's poetry that he made pioneering contributions by cultivating independent forms and significantly expanding themes like love, drinking, and hunting. These themes had traditionally been addressed within the broader framework of the poly-thematic ode. Upon examining the context of his poetry, several distinct characteristics and styles emerge, which are detailed as follows:

(1) **Al-Shi'r al-Jazl**: Indeed, Bashshâr bin Burd crafted numerous couplets within the realm of *jazl*, an eloquent style of poetry dedicated to conveying the allure of love. Below, two of his Arabic couplets are provided through transcription, where he expressed his sentiments about a maid servant:

*Inna Salmâ khuliqat min qaşab
qaşab al-sukkar lâ 'aţam al-jamâl
wa idhâ adnayta minhâ başalan
ghalaba al-misk 'alâ rîh al-başal.*¹⁸

(Salma was created from a reed,
A sugarcane, not from camel bone
And if you approach her who is onion like beautiful;

The musk prevailed over the onion scent.)

Indeed, these two couplets stand as prime examples of Bashshâr's jazl poems. It is worth noting that these particular couplets, composed during his youth and subsequently rejected—possibly due to their perceived lack of taste—nonetheless provide a clear illustration of some of the characteristics associated with poetical beauty supported under *'ilm al-badî'*.

(2) **Shi'r al-Waṣf wa al-Hamâsa:**

We are aware of the fact that in the realm of Arabic literature, descriptive poetry serves as a fundamental element wherein one of its primary objectives is the vivid portrayal of the poet's surroundings. Arabic poets are known for their keen observation of the natural world and other facets that ignite their poetic imagination. Consequently, descriptive elements abound in Arabic poetry, encompassing a wide array of subjects. Their mastery in this aspect of poetic expression is highly commendable, as they skilfully employ it to convey the beauty of nature, the nuances of civilization, and various other captivating themes within their verses. On the other hand, Arabic poetry consisting expression of bravery and enthusiasm has been a specific literary genre of Arabic poetry. In fact, such poetic expression shows passion and enthusiasm within both the poet and the audience. Its thematic scope is wide-ranging and extends beyond the confines of the battlefield. Contrary to the common misconception that enthusiastic poetry is solely associated with war, which typically involves descriptions of battles, praises for heroic figures, and warnings to comrades, it encompasses a broader spectrum of themes. This can include mourning and exalting the deeds of battle heroes or the poet's personal pride in their valour during times of conflict.

Indeed, it is a well-established fact that Bashshâr ibn Burd composed poems that celebrated themes of glorification and bravery. The evidence of his prowess in these areas becomes evident in the following Arabic verses in transcription, where he skilfully expressed his sentiments:

taghuṣṣ bihi al-arḍ al-faḍâ' idhâ ghadâ
tuzâhim arkân al-jibâl manâkibahu
rakibnâ lahu jahran fi-kull muthaqqif
wa abyad tastasqî al-dimâa maḍâribahu
kana mathâr al-naq' fawqa ru'ûsinâ
*wa asyâfinâ layl tahâwî kawâkibahu.*¹⁹

(The Earth will fill space with it, and tomorrow
 The corners of the mountains will crowd out its waves.
 We rode him openly with all cultured
 And white blood dripping from his strikes.
 It was the cause of the dripping over our heads
 And swords on the night of the collapse of its stars.)

The central idea of these three couplets appears to be a vivid and powerful portrayal of a catastrophic event, likely a battle or conflict. The lines convey a sense of impending doom and violence, as the Earth is described as being filled with something that will overwhelm space.

The mention of the mountains and waves suggests a scene of immense chaos and destruction, where the natural world is disrupted by the unfolding events. The imagery of riding openly and the mention of "white blood dripping from his strikes" indicate intense combat and the shedding of blood.

The lines about the cause of the dripping over heads and swords on the night of the collapse of stars emphasize the dramatic and cataclysmic nature of the event, suggesting that it has a profound impact on those involved. In fact, the poetry conveys the idea of a momentous and violent event that disrupts the natural order and leaves a lasting impact on those who witness it.

(3) Shi'r al-Hijâ':

The Arabic term *al-hijâ'* means satire, which is a form of Arabic poetry, and it stands in stark contrast to praise. It emerges from the poet's desire to articulate their dissatisfaction and disdain for another individual or entity. In essence, it represents the antithesis of admiration, appreciation, and the lauding of virtues, which are the cornerstones of praise poetry. Satire, on the other hand, revolves around highlighting discontent and disgust, as well as pointing out faults and shortcomings. In fact, the overarching objective of satire is to cast a critical spotlight on both individuals and society as a whole, with the intent of prompting reform or improvement.

The poetry of Bashshâr bin Burd reveals a distinct adherence to traditional structures, particularly in the composition of his lampoons. These lampoons can be categorized into two main forms: a shorter variety and an extended *qasîda*. Notably, Bashshâr's poetic style and content appear to have been influenced by the polemic poems (*naqâ'id*) of renowned poets like Jarîr and Farazdaq, whom he had the opportunity to hear in person.²⁰

While Bashshâr bin Burd did offer praise to the caliph al-Mahdi in his poetry, it is important to note that his accolades were not accompanied by any tangible rewards or honours. Subsequently, he penned a lampoon directed at al-Mahdi, the content of his satirical Arabic verses are transcribed as follows:

banî ummiya habbaw aṭâla naumakum
inna al-khalîfa ya 'qûb bin da'ûd
ḍâ'at khilâfatukum yâ qaum fa-iltamasû
*khalîfa Allah bayn al-ziqq wa al-'ud.*²¹

(O people of Umayyad, wake up and sleep a long time.

Certainly the Caliph is Yaqoub bin Daoud

Your caliphate has been lost, O people, so seek

God's successor between the skin and the stick.)

Indeed, these two couplets are versified attempting at a call to the people of the Umayyad dynasty to awaken from their slumber and recognize the reality of their situation. The mention of "Caliph Yaqoub bin Daoud" implies a shift in leadership, suggesting that their rule has come to an end.

The phrase “Your caliphate has been lost” highlights the poet’s assertion that the Umayyad caliphate has been lost or usurped, and it is time for the people to acknowledge this fact. The line "seek God's successor between the skin and the stick" can be interpreted as an invitation to the people to seek a legitimate leader in unconventional or unexpected places.

In essence, the poem conveys a message of disillusionment with the Umayyad rule and a call for the people to recognize the changing political landscape and consider alternative leadership.

In addition, another approach of satirical verses of the poet Bashshâr bin Burd is presented here, which is related to a historical issue of the people of Sadus. Notably, Sadus has a rich history closely intertwined with the al-Muammar family since the year 1446 AD. This connection to Sadus traces back to Hassan bin Touq, the patriarch of the Muammar lineage, who acquired Al-Wâsil and Al-Uyaynah, thus establishing his emirate in these territories.

Sadus, among these acquired lands, shifted from the Yazid family of Bani Hanifa to the Muammar family during the year 1446 AD. Departing from Mulham, Hassan bin Touq embarked on a journey to Al-Wasil, particularly Al-Uyaynah, where he not only settled but also cultivated the region, subsequently bequeathing this legacy to his descendants. In this connection, the blind poet Bashshâr bin Burd versified in reference to Sadûs are transcribed as follows:

*ka-anna banî sadûs raḥṭ thaur
khanâfîsu taḥta munkasir al-jidâr.
taḥarriku li-al-fakḥkhâr zubanayayhâ
wa fakhr al-khunfusâ' min al-ṣighâr.* ²²

(It is, as if the Banu Sadus, were a group of bulls
Beetles under the broken wall
Move the pottery its customers
And the pride of the beetle is one of the little ones.)

In fact, the central idea of this poetry appears to be a metaphorical depiction of the Banu Sadus as a group of insignificant or unimpressive individuals. The use of the metaphor comparing them to bulls and beetles under a broken wall conveys a sense of lowliness and obscurity.

The reference to “move the pottery its customers” suggests that the Banu Sadus are involved in menial or unimportant tasks, and their actions don't carry much significance or prestige. The phrase "the pride of the beetle is one of the little ones" underscores the idea that even within their own context, they are not particularly distinguished or exceptional.

Overall, the poem seems to portray the Banu Sadus as a relatively unremarkable or marginalized group, emphasizing their lack of prominence or influence.

(4) Shi‘r al-Madîḥ:

Praise, in the realm of poetry, serves as a language of adulation, flattery, and exaltation. It is a poetic endeavour that articulates the poet's deep admiration for the subject, stemming from specific qualities that distinguish them. Among the most prominent attributes extolled in praise poetry are generosity, courage, loyalty, chivalry, forbearance, justice, strength, noble lineage, and exemplary

deeds—virtues that collectively epitomize the pinnacle of human excellence. In fact, a praise poetry (*shi'r al-madīh*) originates from genuine admiration and heartfelt affection. Besides religious praise for veneration of the Messenger (PBUH), we also find celebrated exceptional individuals like caliphs, princes, kings, leaders, and affluent individuals, with the aim of securing their approval and receiving their benevolence.

Indeed, the city of Basra witnessed a significant penchant for lengthy praise-poems. Within this context, the ceremonial aspects of the royal court played a central role, characterized by the practice of exalting rulers through the recitation of panegyrics during the Great Audience (*maslis al-‘amm*). Public recitations of poetry, especially by poets like Bashshâr bin Burd, had to invariably align with the preferences of the intended audience, given the influence of the prevailing political powers.

Bashshâr directed his panegyrics towards both Umayyad and ‘Abbasid governors of Basra. He also celebrated various princes and caliphs, including the final Umayyad ruler, Marwân, and the ‘Abbasid caliph, al-Mahdî. In terms of form, the majority of his *qaṣīdahs* adhered to traditional structures. Here an attempt has been made to mention the eulogy composed by Bashshâr bin Burd for Abu Ja'far al-Mansur as follows in transcription:

abâ muslim mâ tûlâ ‘aysh bi-dâ'im
wa lâ sâlim ‘ammâ qalîl bi-sâlim
‘alâ al-malik al-jabbâr yaqtaḥim al-radâ
wa yaṣra ‘uhu fî al-mâziq al-mutalâhim
ka-annaka lam tasma‘ bi-qatl mutawwaj
‘azîm wa lam tasma‘ bi-fatḥ al-‘a‘âjim.²³

(Abû Muslim, what a long life is permanent;
 And there is no peace for a few in peace.
 The mighty king storms the ruins;
 And he throws him into a close-knit predicament.
 As if you've never heard of a crested kill;
 Great, and you have not heard of the killing of non-Arabs.)

In fact, the central idea of this poetry, attributed to Abû Muslim, revolves around the fleeting nature of life and the inevitable challenges and conflicts that individuals, even those in positions of power, must face. It underscores the idea that a long-lasting and peaceful life is a rarity, and even those who hold great authority and dominion will eventually confront difficulties that bring them to a critical juncture.

The verse suggests that no one can truly escape the tumultuous nature of existence, as symbolized by the "mighty king" who confronts ruins and finds himself entangled in a difficult situation. The reference to the "crested kill" and the "killing of non-Arabs" implies that even extraordinary feats or conquests, which may seem significant at the moment, can ultimately fade

into obscurity. In essence, the poem conveys the transitory and uncertain nature of human life and the challenges that come with it, regardless of one's status or achievements.

(5) **Al-Fakhr:** The Arabic term *al-fakhr* means poetical expression in a tune of self pride. In this connection, Bashar bin Burd dedicated considerable attention to the purpose of expressing pride in his poetry. In his poetical life, we find that he gave an importance to the versification on pride and glorification. In this connection, his crafting verses were not only eloquent but also carried profound and fervent meanings. His aim was to ignite the hearts of his audience, infusing them with the essence of courage and valour. In his poetry, we frequently encounter moments where he takes pride in both Arab and Persian heritage, alternating his sources of inspiration. Furthermore, he exhibited a strong sense of self-pride throughout his work; because he was proud of his Persian origin; specially since his ancestors were Persian kings, in this connection, an humble attempt has been made to mention his boastful Arabic verses in transcription as follows:

*anâ ibn mulûk al- 'a 'jamiîn taqaṭṭa 'at
'aliyy walî fî al- 'âmirîn 'imâd
idhâ mâ ghaḍibnâ ghaḍba muḍariyya
hatakna hijâb al-shams au qatarat damâ
idhâ mâ 'a 'aznâ sayyidan min qabîla
dhurâ mimbar ṣallâ 'alaynâ wa sallamâ.*²⁴

(I am the son of non-Arab kings, cut off
Ali is my guardian, who is a pillar among the subjects.
If we get angry, it hurts
We broke the veil of the sun or dripped blood
If we honour a master from a tribe
A platform, peace and blessings be upon us.)

The central idea of this poetry is a proclamation of the poet's non-Arab royal lineage and their unwavering loyalty to Ali, who is revered as a strong and influential figure among his followers. The lines emphasize the speaker's identity as a descendant of non-Arab kings, which sets them apart from the Arab population.

The mention of Ali being the guardian and a pillar among the subjects underscores his significance and authority in the poet's worldview. The lines about anger and causing harm suggest that the speaker possesses great power and influence, capable of causing significant disruptions and even violence if provoked.

Additionally, the poetry highlights a sense of honour and respect when the speaker refers to honouring a master from a tribe, suggesting a desire for peace and goodwill in such interactions. In fact, the poem conveys the themes of lineage, loyalty to Ali, strength, and the potential for both conflict and diplomacy in the poet's world.

(6) **Shi'r al-Ghazal:** In Arabic language, the term ghazal denotes love poetry or amatory verse. In this poetical genre, the visually impaired poet Bashshâr bin Burd had a deep appreciation for the

delicate and simple nature of ghazal, often frequenting entertainment and singing gatherings. He would attend these events to engage with the singers and even requested them to perform his poetry in these assemblies. Bashshâr bin Burd had a strong inclination toward fame, and one of his poems, known as “Dhat Dall”, became particularly renowned during the Abbasid era. It was embraced by other poets and incorporated into musical compositions, as it harmoniously fit with the rhythm and melodies of the time.

This particular poem was inspired by Bashshâr bin Burd's admiration for a talented and beautiful singer who possessed intelligence, charm, and exceptional conversational skills. He approached the singer with a request to sing his poetry, drawn to her captivating voice and singing prowess. In a mutually agreed arrangement, the singer asked him not to mention her name in his poetry.

In this poem, Ibn Burd vividly portrayed the singer's beauty, likening her to the full moon due to her extraordinary allure. In view of citing example of his Arabic *ghazal* verses, an endeavour has been made in transcription form as follows:

*Wa dhât dall ka 'anna al-badr sûratuhâ
bâtat tughannî 'amîd al-qalb sakranan
Inna al- 'ûyûn allatî fî tarafihâ ḥawar
qatalnanâ thumma lam yuḥbibna qatlânan.* ²⁵

(And dhât dall, as if the full moon was her picture
She spent night singing at the support of drunken heart
Certainly her eyes at the tip of white poplar
They (eyes) killed us and then did not revive any killer.)

The central idea of these two couplets appears to be a vivid and romantic depiction of a woman, specifically her captivating beauty and its effect on the speaker. The imagery in the poem paints a picture of a woman who is likened to the full moon in terms of her beauty.

The lines suggest that this woman has spent the night singing, which conveys a sense of enchantment and allure. The mention of her eyes being compared to the tip of a white poplar tree emphasizes their brightness and the captivating power they hold.

The final lines indicate that her eyes have had a profound impact on the speaker, suggesting that they have metaphorically "killed" the speaker with their beauty, leaving a lasting impression. The use of "killer" here likely implies the idea of being deeply smitten or enchanted by the woman's eyes. In fact, the poem conveys the theme of admiration and infatuation with a woman's striking beauty and the powerful effect it has on the speaker's heart and emotions.

In addition, it has been observed that the poet Bashshâr bin Burd dedicated a substantial portion of his love poems to eulogizing his beloved ‘Abdah. This article aims to illuminate the unique nuances of his expression and style, which will be explored in the following verses:

Have springs of kindness dried,

Its course gone crooked,
 Or is the partner (the poet) tedious and scorned,
 To be so chidden still?
 My friends, do not deny love's sting,
 Do not refuse a smitten, sorrowful heart its consolation:
 Soul's cure is sight of 'Abdah, and the healing
 That my spirit used to find;
 But stout heart is now subdued –
 Its touch of love that brings me low with its assaults. ²⁶

It is crucial to understand that, apart from the inherent physical ailment of Bashshâr ibn Burd, he expressed gratitude to the divine for bestowing upon him the gift of blindness, allowing him to be spared from witnessing that which he abhorred. As a forward-thinking individual, he found himself in a position where he had deviated from the conventional practice of performing the daily five prayers, ultimately identifying as a Zindiq. His beliefs extended beyond the confines of orthodox Islam, as he also held faith in the Avesta, all the while maintaining a semblance of his Islamic heritage. ²⁷

As mentioned earlier, Bashshâr ibn Burd expressed contentment with his blindness, articulating his sentiment as follows::

I was blind from the womb, and from blindness insight came;
 And a word of the known I built through wondering why;
 And the light, unfathomed, with knowledge emerged ablaze
 Through a heart that saved what others, unseeing, destroy;
 With thoughts like the flowers on earth, and words that I taught
 Lightly to tread when the thoughts came full of thorns. ²⁸

The central idea of the provided poetry is the concept that the poet's blindness from birth led to a unique and profound form of insight and knowledge. Despite their physical blindness, they gained inner vision and understanding through contemplation and wonder. This inner light of

knowledge illuminated their heart and mind, allowing them to preserve and cultivate wisdom that others, who lack such insight, often overlook or destroy. The speaker compares their thoughts to flowers on earth, suggesting that their ideas and understanding are delicate and valuable, requiring careful handling when expressed through words.

It is worth noting that Bashshâr ibn Burd, a prominent figure among the Abbasid poets, exhibited a distinct penchant for intellectual discourse and philosophical contemplation. He stands out as a poet who was profoundly influenced by the Mu‘tazilah, a group of rationalist theologians within the Islamic tradition. This influence is particularly significant because it played a pivotal role in shaping his literary and intellectual contributions.

The Mu‘tazilah, known for their rigorous intellectual debates and philosophical inquiries, left an indelible mark on Islamic thought during the Abbasid era. Their engagement in expansive philosophical thinking and theological discussions not only enriched the intellectual landscape of their time but also had a profound impact on the development of Arabic literature.

Bashshâr ibn Burd's alignment with the Mu‘tazilah's rationalist approach can be seen as a testament to his commitment to intellectual exploration and his desire to engage with the prevailing philosophical currents of his era. Through his poetry, he likely contributed to the dissemination of philosophical ideas, further fuelling the intellectual ferment of the time.

In fact, Bashshâr ibn Burd's association with the Mu‘tazilah and his interest in intellectual debates and philosophical thinking exemplify the interconnectedness of poetry, philosophy, and intellectual discourse during the Abbasid period, fostering an environment conducive to the expansion of Arabic literature.²⁹

Conclusion:

Bashshâr bin Burd's poetic legacy stands as a remarkable testament to the resilience of human creativity in the face of physical adversity. Despite his blindness, he emerged as a prominent figure in Arabic literature during the flourishing Abbasid era. His poetry, characterized by vivid imagery, deep understanding of classical literature, structural finesse, and a harmonious fusion of ancient and modern styles, continues to captivate and inspire readers. Bashshâr's precision in expression and his unique approach to ghazal poetry, infused with influences from diverse civilizations, further enrich his literary contributions. His enduring impact showcases the timeless power of human creativity and the enduring allure of poetic expression.

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