

A Ghazal and its Parts: A Closer Look at Ghalib's Naqsh Faryādī

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All of us who read Ghalib know that his dīvān begins with “*naqsh faryādī hai kis kī shokhī-e tahrīr kā/ kāghazī hai pairahan har paīkar-e tasvīr kā.*”¹ It was the traditional practice to begin a dīvān of classical poetry with a *ḥamd* or poem in praise of the Creator. But, is *naqsh faryādī* a *ḥamd*? This paper examines some important threads of the discourse-commentary on this famous ghazal. It also tracks Ghalib's editing of this ghazal intending to go forward with new perspectives on the ordering of *bayts* (two-line verses) in the ghazal. It is an exercise in scrutinizing a ghazal for the coherence of the theme through a careful study of the arrangement of verses.

While working on the progression of ghazals in Ghalib's dīvāns, I was struck by changes in the ordering of verses. This generally happened when new verses were added, or verses were deleted. I was also fascinated by how Ghalib cherry-picked verses from two or three ghazals in the same

¹ Maulana Imtiyaz Ali Khan Arshi, *Divān-e Ghālib*, New Delhi. Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu Hind, (second ed.) 1982, p.

A dīvān is a collection of poems arranged in alphabetical order by the radīf (refrain). A poet was considered to be a *sahib-e dīvān* if he/she had a collection of poetry with radīfs representing nearly all the characters of the alphabet. It is traditional to begin a dīvān with a poem in praise of God.

meter and rhyme (ham tarh) and made a new ghazal. I compared the old ghazals with the newly minted one— what was going on in Ghalib’s mind as he moved verses around? Was there something deeper in the editorial process, beyond simply removing verses that could be regarded as ‘heavy’ or ambiguous, even meaningless? I am raking up an age-old discussion here: is the ghazal a (whole) poem qua poem? Or, in other words, does the ghazal have a semblance of specificity as implied by theme, images or allusions?

According to Alessandro Bausani, in the classical ghazal each verse forms a closed unit, only slightly interconnected with others; we are in the presence of a bunch of motifs only lightly tied together.² Eminent scholars of the classical ghazal in Persian and Urdu have described it as filigree work, full of finely wrought details with no strictly logical sequence of verses. Michael Hillman’s work (*Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, 1976) is a good place to approach the question of unity in ghazals as a genre.³

Let us try to come up with a working definition of unity, or the presence of unity, or even the concept of what is meant by poetic unity in poems. T.S. Eliot called it “inner unity”. A combination or ordering of parts in a literary or artistic production such as to constitute a whole or promote an individual effect.⁴ I find it to be a principle in the ordering of verses in a ghazal; an integration of its parts. I ask: Is the order of *bayts* crucial to the singleness of effect that is predicated of the unified object? Does the deletion of one or two *bayts* from a particular ghazal necessarily and significantly affect the ghazal’s unity? Or, was Ghalib’s concern in ordering his *bayts* have something to do with creating an effect that can be called an assemblage of parts within a whole? This attention to editorial detail is evident in Ghalib’s *dīvāns*.

² Alessandro Bausani. “The Development of Form in Persian Lyrics.” *East and West; New Series* 9, 1958. P 145-53.

³ Michael C. Hillman. *Unity in the Ghazals of Hafez*, Minneapolis and Chicago, Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976

⁴ T.S. Eliot. *On Poetry and Poets*, New York. Farrar, Strauss, 1957, p66.

Naqsh faryādī, is the first ghazal in Ghalib’s earliest dīvān— the manuscript dīvān of 1816 inscribed in Ghalib’s own hand. It comprises seven verses. In the 1821 dīvān, it still has seven verses, but the dīvān itself begins with manqābat (poem in praise, like a qasīdah, generally of Hazrat Ali, and other prophets/saints) in Persian.⁵ The manuscript of the 1821 dīvān shows two additional verses copied in a neat hand in the margin, a writing that is definitely not Ghalib’s.⁶ These two verses were added into the body of ghazal in the 1826 dīvān, as verses number seven and eight, just above the closing verse, making it a total of nine. The 1826 dīvān also has an addition inscribed in the margin. This time, it is a reworked version of verse two.⁷ The final version of this ghazal comprises only five verses in the first edition of the published *Dīvān-e Ghalib* (1841). Thus, we note that Ghalib modified some verses, deleted and moved around a few, changing the ordering of this ghazal in the published dīvān. In the *Gul-e Ra’nā*, Ghalib’s first selection of his poems, compiled in 1828, he chose only three verses from naqsh faryādī, numbers one, seven, and five (in that order).⁸ Perhaps we could take that to mean that he considered these to be the best from that ghazal. But first, let us return

⁵ This manqabat has 60 verses. It is followed by a qasīdah-e maqabat in Urdu and similar poems. The last one in this section is in Urdu, and ends with the following verse:

Yahī bār bār jī meñ merī āyī hai keh Ghalib/karūñ khvān-e guftagū par dil-o jāñ kī mehmānī

The ghazal section begins after this manqabat.

⁶ *Nuskah-e Hamīdiyyah*, digitized version of the original manuscript divan of 1821. Published by Shahab Sattar, 2016. See my Introduction to the volume for further details.

⁷ *Dīvān-e Ghalib, Nuskah-e Shirani*, Lahore, Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1969, p.2

⁸ *naqsh faryādī hai kis kī shokhī-e tahrīr kā/ kaghazī hai pairāhan har paikar-e tasvīr kā*

Jazbah-e be ikhtiyār-e shauq dekha chahiye/sīnah-e shamshir se bar hai dam shamshir ka

Kav kav-e sakht jāni hāi’tanhāi nah pūchch/subh karnā sh kā lānā hai jū-e shīr kā

to the five verses in the published *dīvān* and the commentary on this iconic ghazal.

Frances Pritchett has a consummate essay on Ghalib's commentators.⁹ She gives us a brief tour of Ghalib's commentarial history, with a detailed overview of the commentarial remarks on the first verse of the first ghazal in Ghalib's *dīvān*.

naqsh faryādī hai kis kī shokhī-e tahrīr kā

kāghazī hai pairahan har paīkar-e tasvīr kā

Whose mischievous writing does the picture complain about?

Every figure in the picture wears a paper robe.

This verse had perplexed and ruffled many during Ghalib's lifetime itself. The second line, in particular, was an enigma for those who did not know of the supposed ancient Iranian practice of petitioners wearing paper robes when they had to present a complaint at the court of the ruler. We find an allusion to this practice from an explanation offered by Ghalib himself. Occasionally, in Ghalib's voluminous correspondence, we find letters of friends and pupils who would ask him to explain a complicated, ambiguous verse or two.¹⁰ In a letter to Maulvi Abdur Razzaq Shākīr, Ghalib explains this verse:

In Iran, there is a tradition that a plaintiff puts on paper robes when he goes to seek justice from the ruler. This is akin to lighting a torch in the daytime or carrying blood-soaked garments on a bamboo pole. Therefore, the poet reflects, of whose impudent writing is the image a plaintiff—since the form of the image/picture is paper. That is, although

⁹ Frances Pritchett, "The Meaning of Meaningless Verses, Ghalib and His Commentators," *A Wilderness of Possibilities, Urdu Studies in Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Kathryn Hansen and David Lelyveld. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2005. 251-72.

¹⁰ All of Ghalib's letters that address literary issues are collected in one volume titled *'Ūd-e Hindī*, ed. Saiyyid Murtuza Husain Fazil, Lahore, Majlis Taraqqi Urdu Adab, 1967.

existence, like the picture, is merely illusional, it is the cause of sorrow and regret.¹¹

Poet and scholar Saiyyid Ali Haidar Nazm Tabatabai wrote the first complete commentary on Ghalib's Urdu dīvān. Nazm Tabatabai was learned in Arabic and Persian; he had read a smattering of western theoretical works and was inclined to be more critical than laudatory. Tabatabai, in his *Sharh-e Dīvān-e Urdu-e Ghalib*, was quick to denounce verses that did not measure up to his exacting viewpoints. Nonetheless, it was considered to be a bit audacious when he labelled Ghalib's opening verse as muhmal (meaningless). Tabatabai put question marks on what he considered to be flaws in this verse. According to Tabatabai, kāghazī pairahan (paper garment/robe) is a known istilāh (expression, idiom) in Persian and Urdu, but the tradition of plaintiffs wearing paper robes is not substantiated. More importantly, he writes that the Sufī devotional practice of fanā fī Allah or the high point of complete immersion in love for the Creator, so much so that separation becomes pain and grief, is not obvious in the verse.¹² Thus, according to Tabatabai, the verse is too ambivalent to be assigned any meaning.

Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's pioneering *Tafhīm-e Ghalib* offers a point for point, brilliant interpretation of this verse. According to Faruqi, the Iranian custom that Tabatabai questions, is not unsubstantiated, but has precedence. He quotes a verse by Kamal Isma'il:¹³

Kaghazīñ jamah beh poshīd-o ba dargah āmad

Zādeh-e khātir-e man tā beh dehī dād-e marā

It wore a paper robe and arrived at the royal court

So that my poem would get better justice

¹¹ *Ūd-e Hindī*, p.393

¹² Tabatabai, p 2.

¹³ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Tafhīm-e Ghalib*, p20. Kamal al Din Ismā'il Isfahani (1172-1237) was a celebrated poet especially known for qasīdah
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According to Faruqi, Tabatabai's objection that there is no word in the verse that attests to the plaintiff's despair at existence being a cause of separation from God, is also incorrect. The picture is paper-clad in protest; it is protesting for two reasons: one, for being created in a transient world; and two, for separation from its creator. The key question of the first line is *kiskī*, of whose writing does the picture complain? Why should we assume that the Power is God? Because, as yet it has not been proved which being it is against whose 'mischievousness of writing' the image is a plaintiff. In other words, this verse is indeed about the transience of existence or its inescapable grief and suffering; but its fundamental question is, 'Who is that Power before whose might and grandeur everything is helpless?'

The first line's 'Whose?' is more interrogatory than astonished: it is possible that if the question 'Whose mischievousness of writing?' can receive a true answer, then the 'figure in the picture' can seek justice. The 'image' is, in truth, a man, who is speechless like a picture, and who in a language of speechlessness is making the complaint, 'Who ensnared us in suffering?'. It is also a cause for reflection that the image is speechless, and its very speechlessness is the proof of its being a plaintiff. Ghalib was very fond of this kind of paradoxical utterance.¹⁴

Faiz Ahmad Faiz has an interesting, plausible explanation of this verse.¹⁵ He suggests that a Sufistic interpretation could be misleading. By *shokhī-e tahrīr* is implied "intense writing"—the intensity of thought of the poet himself. Faiz's explanation is: There is so much intensity/passion in my thoughts that when I put them on paper, the pen and paper protest in pain. He quotes a Persian verse of Ghalib:

¹⁴ Faruqi, p.21.

¹⁵ Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mata'-e Lauh-o Qalam*, Karachi. Maktaba Daniyal, (third edition), 1983, p. 62-63

I am grateful to for this reference. Faiz's first collection of poems is called *Naqsh-e Faryādī* (1941). We can see how the meaning of the book's title resonates Faiz's interpretation of this verse.

Ghalib na bud shevah-e man qāfiyah bandī

Zulmīst keh bar kīlk-o qalam mī kunam im shab

Ghalib, I am not a poet who only matches rhyming words

It is pain that I am writing with pen and paper tonight

Verse two

Moving on to verse two (which was modified to become the closing verse):¹⁶

ātashīñ pā huñ gudāaz-e vaḥshat-e zindāñ na puchch

Mū-e ātash dīdah hai halqah merī zanjūr kā

My imprisoned feet are fiery from the heat of restlessness,

Every link in my chain is a fire singed hair

Modified verse two (becomes the closing verse in published divan)

as keh huñ Ghalib asīrī meñ bhī ātash zer -e pā

Mū-e ātash dīdah hai halqah merī zanjūr kā

Ghalib, even in bondage I am so aflame with restlessness;

Every link in my chain is a fire singed hair

Tabatabai offers a clear interpretation of this verse. He explains the meaning of ātash zer-e pā. That is one who is restless and agitated. Mū-e ātash dīdah is fire singed hair, that is hair frizzled and curly like chains. Obviously, there is no discussion of ātashīñ pā here in Nazm or in Pritchett's commentary.¹⁷ Ātashīñ pā or 'fiery feet' is an evocative image, more so than ātash zer-e pā. In my comparative reading, I think that the earlier line/version shows more anguish. The torment or anguish felt by the speaker in the poem is accentuated by vaḥshat-e zindāñ, the desolation

¹⁶ Divan-e Ghalib 1826, Nuskhah-e Shirānī, p.1

¹⁷ Frances W. Pritchett: *A Desertful of Roses*

of imprisonment, and the personal plea, ‘nā pūchch’ expressed in don’t ask. The amended line in the closing verse is more assertive in implying that even imprisonment hasn’t broken the spirit of rebelliousness. We can see that Ghalib has not merely moved a verse from position two to the end of the ghazal but has changed the mood of the verse as well.¹⁸

In the earlier versions, the closing verse was:

Vaḥshat-e khvāb-e ‘adam shor-e tamāshā hai Asad

Juz mazah jauhar nahīn āī’inah-e ta’bīr kā

The disquiet from dreaming of non-being lies in the tumult of watching

There is no *jauhar* of the mirror of interpretation but for tamāshā

The verse is unsettling in its implied imagery of the end of existence. The phrase *shor-e tamāshā* or the tumult of witnessing the end of the world is evocative in its polyphony. Shor embodies both sound and sight inducing an emotional response or *kaifīyat* here. The second line is complicated with abstractions—Jauhar are the fine lines on a mirror caused by polishing; it is also the essence of the mirror. Mirror gazing was a way of foretelling or interpreting (tā’bīr) of the future and/or the dream. But, Ghalib the skeptic, brushes off the reality of such interpretation. These practices are only for entertainment. There is a wonderful play between *tamasha* and *mazah*.

There is a remarkable history of interpretation about this verse which has been missed by astute commentators such as Gyan Chand Jain. Due to a scribal error, *juz* was inscribed as *jo* in the 1821 dīvān, our most reliable source for the unpublished verses.¹⁹ This reading, that is, *jo mazah*, made the verse rather meaningless. Maulana Arshi corrected this

¹⁸ I had an interesting, hair-splitting discussion on Twitter about the changes implemented by Ghalib—ātashiñ pā versus ātash zer-e pā.

¹⁹ Nuskah-e Hamiddiyah, digitized version, p.

error by replacing it with *juz mizhah* (but for eyelashes) since a mirror's jauhar is compared to eyelashes:²⁰

Jo mizhah jauhar nahīñ āi'nah-e ta 'bīr kā

There is no Jauhar of the mirror of interpretation except eyelashes

Jain follows a similar reading as Maulana Arshi.²¹ However, the 1826 dīvān, *Nuskhah-e Shirani*, has *juz mazah*, not *juz mizhah*.

If we study this ghazal as a whole, it makes sense that Ghalib replaced the *vaḥshat-e khvāb-e 'adam* with the modified version of verse two. I say this because this ghazal's essence is about existence as a prison and the struggle to be free. In this context, the fetters being singled from restlessness and eagerness to be free ties the strands of the theme together.

Verse 3 (unpublished)

Shokhī-e nairang sayd –e vaḥshat-e tā'us hai

Dām sabze meñ hai parvāz-e chaman taskhīr kā

The vividness of illusion makes the peacock restless and captive;

Greenery is a net that captivates, curtailing flight across the world's garden

This verse continues the theme of existence as a prison from where release can be difficult. Greenery, which is the beauty of the world captivates us and holds us back from flight. The verse is both complicated and complex which could be the reason for removing it from the published version.

Verse 4 (unpublished)

²⁰ Arshi, p.11

²¹ Jain, p 61. "Jo mizhah jauhar nahīñ". According to Jain, "that person, whose eyes do not have the perception, his claim that that he is capable of seeing the wonders of the world is false. His vision is scattered dreams seen in the state of non-being ('adam')." I find Jain's explanation forced because the two lines don't come together.

*Lazzat-e ijād-e nāz afsūn-e ‘arz-e zauq-e qatl
na ‘l ātash meñ hai tegh-e yār se nakhchīr kā*

The pleasure of inventing new forms of coquetry whets the desire to be slain

The lover-victim is eager for the sword to fall, the iron is in the fire

This verse can perhaps be only be relished by veteran ghazal lovers because of torturous imagery. The beloved enjoys finding new ways of enhancing coquetry which are torturous for the lover. The lover cannot wait for the sword to fall and finds the wait extremely unbearable. Sorcerers used to write a name on a horseshoe and put it in the fire; this would make the named person extremely agitated. The lover is in a similar condition *na ‘l ātash meñ hai*, while waiting for the beloved to strike.

One could interpret this verse to signify the eagerness of union. Once again, though the verse adheres to the theme of union with the beloved (God) it fits somewhat uneasily in the bigger theme of existence as a cause of suffering.

Verse 5 (published)

*Kāv kāv-e sakht jānī hā ‘i tanhā ‘ī nah pūchch
Subh karnā shām kā lānā hai jū-e shīr kā*

Digging down through layers of uncontainable loneliness—don’t ask how

To turn the night to day is like carving a channel through stone

There can be no doubt that this verse is among the best of Ghalib and embodies many features of excellence. The poignant love-story of Shirin and Farhad wherein the lover, Farhad, had to dig through stony mountains

to bring a stream of milk in order to win Shirin.²² Farhad killed himself when he received the false news of Shirin's death.

Sakht-jān, is one who refuses to be destroyed. In this verse, loneliness or solitude is irrepressible, therefore sakht jān; it gnaws persistently, producing a scraping, gnawing sound, kāv-kāv. Ghalib captures the sound-producing beautiful onomatopoeic resonance. Dawn is white like milk, and the mountain is also hard and unyielding, sakht-jān. Ghalib's thought rises above the love-story when he imagines loneliness as this uncontainable mass, digging through which is like scraping the surface of hard rock.

Verse 6 (unpublished)

Khisht pusht-e dast-e 'ijz-o qālib āghosh-e vidā'

Pur huā hai sail se paimānah kis ta 'mīr kā

The upturned palm on dust, signaling the body's helplessness in embrace at farewell;

Whose wine-cup of existence is filled with a flood that destroys?

The upturned palm (pusht-e dast) is a signal of surrender. In this verse, it is a farewell. The verse is despondent. Existence is bound with destruction. Khisht (dust/earth), qālib (body) and tā'mīr (creation) have a synergy, or munāsibat (consonance), here. This verse fits the sequence of verses in the unedited, earlier version of the ghazal but not in the final. Ghalib made the right decision to not include it in the final version because like verses three and four, it has unfamiliar references.

Verse 7 (published)

Jazbah-e be ikhtiyār-e shauq dekhā chāhiye

²² Princess Shirin was the wife of King Khusrau. For details of the Shirin-Khusrau-Farhad romance as penned by the twelfth century Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi, see:

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ghalib/texts/txt_chelko_wski_1975_nizami.pdf

Sīnah-e shamshīr se bāhar hai dam shamshīr kā

The uncontrolled eagerness of passion is worth seeing

The sword's breath is out of its breast

The crucial word here is *dam* which has two meanings: breath and edge (bārh). Nazm Tabatabai is right on the mark when he incisively interprets this verse: "I am so eager to be slain that the sword's breath has come out of its breast."²³

Verse 8 (published)

Āgahī dām-e shunīdan jis qadar chāhe bichāye

mudda 'ā 'anqā hai apnī 'ālam-e taqrīr kā

No matter how awareness spreads its net

My world of words' intent is the imagined bird

Tabatabai's interpretation seems literal but it is unconvincing (at least to me) because it goes off on a tangent. He emphasizes the elusiveness of meaning in Ghalib's poetry: However much you listen to my speech (taqrīr) it is impossible to reach its meaning (matlab). If the desire to know (āgahī) spreads its nets like a hunter, no matter. The meaning of my speech-poetry is like the anqā bird that can never be caught.²⁴

Other commentators have followed Tabatabai's lead. Bekhud Mohani summarizes: no matter how much effort the power of understanding makes, it cannot reach the meaning of my verses.²⁵

Ghalib uses the metaphor of 'anqā fairly often in his early verses. I interpret 'anqā (imaginary bird) as symbolic of the power of imagination. It is an image of something that exists only in imagination. Ghalib, in fact, is asserting the superiority of his imagination, which is elusive and flighty.

²³ Tabatabai, p.2

²⁴ Tabatabai, p.2.

²⁵

However much one tries to catch the meaning of his speech-poetry, it is elusive because his imagination is boundless and cannot be pinned down to an object or a meaning.

Vahshat kahāñ keh bekhūdī inshā kare ko 'ī

Hastī ko lafz-e ma 'nī-e 'anqā kare ko 'i

There isn't enough madness that one would write down bekhudī;
And make existence into a word meaning anqā

If we give hastī or existence a name, we are limiting it. Ghalib is of course going beyond that. He suggests that *existence* is the word whose meaning, or idea is 'anqā. The 'anqā is something non-existent. If hastī equals 'anqā that means existence is equal to non-existence. One does have to have sufficient madness to reach a state of travelling out of and away from one's own self when existence becomes non-existence. This is an extremely erudite theme, expressed in near-perfect language.

Verse 9 (unpublished)

Vahshat-e khvāb-e 'adam shor-e tamashā hai Asad

Juz mazah jauhar nahñ āī'inah-e ta'bīr kā

The disquiet from dreaming of death lies in the tumult of watching
There is no *jauhar* of the mirror of interpretation but for tamāshā

I have discussed this verse in the context of its being replaced with verse two as the closing verse. I argue that moving verse two to the end, as well as altering it brings closure to the hamd/ghazal that was not happening in the early version. Naqsh faryādī is a protest/prayer and concludes with the image of the captive being whose restless feet melt chains.

Let us compare the two versions, the 1826 text with the published version, as to how they appear as poem qua poem.

The 1826 dīvān

Whose mischievous writing does the picture protest?
Every figure in the picture wears a paper robe.
My imprisoned feet are aflame from the heat of restlessness,
Every link in my chain is frizzled as fire singed hair
Vividness of illusion makes the peacock restless and captive
Greenery is a net that captivates, curtailing flight across the world's
garden
Pleasure of inventing new forms of coquetry, whets the desire to slay
The lover-victim is eager for the sword to fall, the iron is in the fire
Digging down through layers—don't ask of intensity of loneliness
To pass the night to dawn is like carving a channel through stone
The upturned palm, signaling the body's helplessness in the embrace
at farewell
Whose wine-cup of existence is filled with a flood that destroys
The eagerness of unbridled passion is worth seeing
Like a sword's breath is drawn out of its breast
No matter how awareness spreads its net
My world of words' focus is the imagined bird
The disquiet from dreaming of non-being lies in the tumult of
watching
There is no *jauhar* of the mirror of interpretation but for tamasha

In published Divān

Whose mischievous writing does the picture protest?
Every figure in the picture wears a paper robe.

Digging down through layers—don't ask of the intensity of loneliness

To pass the night to dawn is like carving a channel through stone

The eagerness of unbridled passion is worth seeing

Like a sword's breath is drawn out of its breast

No matter how far awareness spreads its nets

My world of words' focus is the imagined bird

Ghalib, even in bondage I am aflame with restlessness

Every link in my chain is like fire singed hair

The central idea of this poem is that we are captives of existence. The world is a prison from where the only escape can be death. But the captive goes through intense experiences before submergence into non-existence. The world captivates with its illusions. Eagerness to attain union in love is as stiflingly powerful as gulping for air to breathe. Awareness tries to trap the bird of imagination—curb its flight, but the captive being is restless and the frenzy melts fetters that restrain.

Conclusion

In 1971, Aijaz Ahmad published a pathbreaking book *Ghazals of Ghalib*.²⁶ The book comprises translations or versions of Ghalib's select ghazals rendered into English by America's leading poets. Ahmad gave literal translations of Ghalib's selected verses to poets and asked them to produce poems that can be (for want of a term) called recreations. The translators were asked to be true only to the spirit of the ghazal. They could be literal or drift away from strict accuracy of details. I am quoting from a letter Adrienne Rich to Ahmad that is produced from the above book.²⁷

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²⁷ Aijaz Ahmad. p.xxv

...I needed a way of dealing with very complex and scattered material which was demanding a different kind of unity from that imposed on it by the isolated, single poem: in which certain experiences needed to find both their intensest rendering and to join with other experiences not logically or chronologically connected in any obvious way. I have been trying to make the couplets as autonomous as possible and to allow the unity of the ghazal to emerge from underneath, as it were, through images, through association..."

The ghazal form has a circular unity of theme that is comparable to the western concept of linear thematic unity. Thematic unity in ghazals as Rich has pointed is subjective and enhanced through association.

A closer look at the ghazal shows that the sense of disjointedness or unconnectedness of one verse to the next is driven by the performance aspect of the ghazal. As a poem meant to be heard and appreciated in a verse by verse setting amid a large audience, it is seldom pored over as a whole. The consistency of rhyme and meter, that is the sound pattern makes it easier to shuffle the order or verses. The poem is held together by its aural tone.

Before I close this essay, I want to open this discussion to a wider audience by connecting the ghazal with lyric poetry. There are many aspects of the ghazal that are similar to lyric, notably the density of its verbal and formal mediation with the world, self-reflexivity, its language-specific intricacies and textures, and its transcultural hybridization.²⁸ I found my idea that the ease of memorizing ghazals (helped the jumbling of verses order) validated in Ramazani's incisive essay when he reiterated the lyrics "iterability, rhythmic intensity and memorability."²⁹ There is much to be gleaned from Ramazani's short essay and Jonathan Culler's seminal volume on lyric poetry.³⁰ For our purposes, transregional/cultural

²⁸ Jahan Ramazani, "Lyric Poetry: Intergeneric, Transnational, Translingual," *JLT* 2017; 11(1): 97-107.

²⁹ Ramazani, p 105

³⁰ Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, Cambridge, MA 2015.

studies of the ghazal at macro and micro levels would open dialog across languages. Rekhtah, particularly the early form of the ghazal in the Indian subcontinent had remarkable micro-interlingualism. Such hybridization helped in promoting and popularizing the ghazal. I think that the cultural practice of quoting verses in verbal discourse had to do with the ease of memorizing facilitated by the ghazal's sonic structure. Poetry games such as baytbāzī in which the last letter of the previous bayt prompted the next quotation with the same letter reinforced the inclination to memorize disparate verses across ghazals rather than ghazals as a whole poem.

A good poem may not be hurt if it loses a line or two, but some lines in the poem are more effective than others. In a ghazal, some verses stand out much more than others, they are plucked from the ghazal, quoted often, and inscribed in our memories. Ghalib's editorial finesses however allow us to rethink the coherence of the individual verses in a ghazal and how the ordering of verses may be crucial rather than superficial.