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History of Ghazal

By Syed Rizvi

Ghazal originated in Iran in the 10th century A.D. It grew from the Persian qasida, which in verse

form had come to Iran from Arabia. The qasida was a panegyric written in praise of the emperor or his noblemen. The part of the qasida called tashbib got detached and developed in due course of time into the ghazal. Whereas the qasida sometimes ran into as many as 100 couplets or more in monorhyme, the ghazal seldom exceeded twelve, and settled down to an average of seven. Because of its comparative brevity and concentration, its thematic variety and rich suggestiveness, the ghazal soon eclipsed the qasida and became the most popular form of poetry in Iran.

The ghazal came to India with the advent and extension of the Muslim influence from the 12th century onwards. The Moghuls brought along with them Iranian culture and civilization, including Iranian poetry and literature. When Persian gave way to Urdu as the language of poetry and culture in India, the ghazal, the fruit of Indo-Iranian culture, found its opportunity to grow and develop. Although the ghazal is said to have begun with Amir Khusro (1253–1325) in Northern India, Deccan in the South was its real home in the early stages. It was nursed and trained in the courts of Golconda and Bijapur under the patronage of Muslim rulers. Mohd. Quli Qutab Shah, Wajhi, Hashmi, Nusrati and Wali may be counted among its pioneers. Of these, Wali Deccany (1667–1707) may be called the Chaucer of Urdu poetry. Wali's visit to Delhi made in 1700 acquires a historic significance. This visit was instrumental in synthesizing the poetic streams of the South and the North. Wali's poetry awakened the minds of the Persian-loving North to the beauty and richness of Urdu language, and introduced them to the true flavor of ghazal, thus encouraging its rapid growth and popularity.

In its form, the ghazal is a short poem rarely of more than a dozen couplets in the same metre. It always opens with a rhyming couplet called matla. The rhyme of the opening couplet is repeated at the end of second line in each succeeding verse, so that the rhyming pattern may be represented as AA, BA, CA, DA, and so on. In addition to the restriction of rhyme, the ghazal also observes the convention of radif. Radif demands that a portion of the first line — comprising not more than two or three words — immediately preceding the rhyme-word at the end, should rhyme with its counterpart in the second line of the opening couplet, and afterwards alternately throughout the poem. The opening couplet of the ghazal is always a representative couplet: it sets the mood and tone of the poem and prepares us for its proper appreciation. The last couplet of the ghazal called makta often includes the pen-name of the poet, and is more personal than general in its tone and intent. Here the poet may express his own state

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of mind, or describe his religious faith, or pray for his beloved, or indulge in poetic self-praise. The different couplets of the ghazal are not bound by the unity and consistency of thought. Each couplet is a self-sufficient unit, detachable and quotable, generally containing the complete expression of an idea.

Some poets including Hasrat, Iqbal and Josh have written ghazals in the style of a nazm, based on a single theme, properly developed and concluded. But such ghazals are an exception rather than a rule, and the traditional ghazal still holds sway. However, we do come across, off and on, even in the works of classical poets, ghazals exhibiting continuity of theme or, more often, a set of verses connected in theme and thought. Such a thematic group is called a qita, and is presumably resorted to when a poet is confronted with an elaborate thought difficult to be condensed in a single verse. Although the ghazal deals with the whole spectrum of human experience, its central concern is love. Ghazal is an Arabic word which literally means talking to women.

Syed Rizvi

Shaairy | Lovely Shayari | Ghazal

friendship sms | Lovely sms | Cute sms

Different Forms of Urdu Poetry

By Syed Rizvi

The following forms of Urdu poetry are known, some more popular than others: fard

Gazal
hamd
hazal
hijv
madah
manqabat
marsiiya
masnavii
munaajaat
musaddas
naat
nazm
qasiidaa
qataa
qavaallii
rubaayii
salaam
sehraa
vaasoKht

fard

A composition consisting of only one sher.

Gazal (pronounced "guzzle")

Ghazal is a collection of couplets (shers or ashaar) which follow the rules of `matla', `maqta', `bahar', `qafiya' and `radeef'. The couplets are complete in themselves. All the couplets of a ghazal must be of the same bahar, end in the same words (radeef) and have the same rhyming pattern (qaafiyaa). Every ghazal MUST have a matla. A ghazal may or may not have a maqta but if it does, it has to be the last sher of the ghazal.

Ghazals which do not have a radeef are called Gair–muraddaf ghazals. In such cases, the rule of qafiya is strictly followed. These type of ghazals are very rare. Ghazals with the same radeef are called ham–radeef ghazals.

hamd

Poem written in praise of God.

hazal

Humourous poetry, also known as `mazaahiyaa' or `mazaakiyaa' shaayari. Some examples of humourous Urdu poetry can be viewed here.

hijv

A satirical poem written to condemn or abuse a person. This type of poetry is considered inferior and generally avoided by reputed poets. The opposite of a hijv is a madah which is written in praise of patrons.

madah

Poem written in praise of royalty, patrons, etc.

manqabat

A poem written in praise of members of the family of the holy Prophet.

marsiiyaa (muhr–see–yaa)

An elegy written to mourn the death of a great man or a dearly

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loved person.

In its stricter sense, traditionally accepted in Urdu, a marsiya is an elegy written specifically in honour of the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Husain and his comrades at Karbala. It describes the battle fought on the plains of Karbala by Hazrat Imam Husain against the army of Yazid. The most well known writers of Marsiya in Urdu are Mir baber Ali Anees and Salamat Ali Dabir. Sub–parts of the marsiya are called Nauha and Soz.

masnavii(pronounced "mus–na–vee")

A long narrative poem – much longer than the ghazal – embodying religious, romantic or didactic stories. It is written in rhyming couplets, with each couplet having a different rhyme and radeef. The most famous masnavis are Masnavi–e–Rumi in Persian, Shah Namah of Firdausi, and Zehar–e–Ishq in Urdu.

munaajaat

A lyrical poem written as a prayer to God.

musaddas

A poem in which each unit consists of 6 lines. The most well known poet of this style of writing was

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Maulana Altaf Husain Hali.

naat

A poem written in praise of the holy Prophet.

nazm

In a broad sense, nazm is a term used to define all kinds of Urdu poetry which do not fall into any other category. However, in a literary sense, a nazm is a well organized, logically evolving poem where each individual verse serves the need of the central concept or theme of the poem. Though a nazm is traditionally written in rhymed verse, there are many examples of nazms written in unrhymed verse, or even in free verse.

qasiidaa (pronounced "quh-see-daa")

A panygeric, or poem written in praise of a king or a nobleman, or a benefactor. As in a ghazal, the opening couplet of a qasida, is a rhyming couplet, and its rhyme is repeated in the second line of each succeeding verse. The opening part of the qasida, where the poet may talk in general about love and beauty, man or nature, life or death, is called the `tashbib' or `tamheed'.

Interestingly, the ghazal has evolved from the qasida. Over time, the tashbib got detached and developed into what we today know as Gazal. A qasida is usually quite long, sometimes running into more than a 100 couplets. A Gazal is seldom more than 12 couplets long, averaging about 7 couplets.

qataa

A poem consisting of four lines, in the form of two shers. However, unlike shers in a ghazal, the subject of the two shers is the same. It is believed that the qataa was invented for occasions when poets felt that they were unable to express their thoughts completely and satisfactorily in a single sher.

qavaalii

Traditionally a devotional song expressing love and oneness with God sung by a group of people to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Nowadays, qawaallis cover popular topics like love and wine.

rubaayii (pronounced "ru-baa-ee")

A self-sufficient quatrain, rhyming (a, a, b, a) and dealing generally with a single idea, which is customarily introduced and developed with the aid of similes in the first three lines, and concluded, with concentrated effort and impact, in the fourth line. The most well known rubaayis in Persian were written by Omar Khayyam. In Urdu, some of the most well known practitioners of this form were Firaq, Josh and Yagna Yaas Changezi.

salaam

A salutary poem written in praise of the holy Prophet. It can also be a poem describing the incidents of Karbala. It is recited standing up.

sehraa

A song sung at the time of tying the seharaa during the wedding ceremony. It is usually in praise of the bride/groom and their relatives.

vaasoKht

A poem describing the displeasure and carelessness of a lover

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