



## Mirza Ghalib: Genius of the Great Master of Persian Ghazal

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Ghalib was the most intellectual poet and a versatile literary genius of his time. He was a great artist and possessed a vivid and dynamic personality. He had excelled in almost all branches of Persian poetry and prose. But his main field is ghazal in which his colourful personality is fully projected. His ghazals are characterised by the depth of thought and feeling, maturity of wisdom, original interpretation of reality, awareness to problems of life, analogical expressions, humanism, liberalism etc. His ghazals are the best expressions of his Poetic genius.

Ghalib has often been criticised for creating intricacies in his poetry. This may be true in the sense that in him we find the philosophical profoundness of Bedil with complex imageries and thoughtful diction. But ghazals full of freshness, optimism and lucidity are not rare. A representative ghazal reads as under:

"If thou dost not believe,  
I my anxious waiting, come!  
Don't produce lame excuses,  
Don't be quarrelsome, come!  
"My heart cannot be gladdened,  
With one or two gestures of oppression;  
I swear in the name of my death,  
That thou should come with all the provisions of time.

"Thou hast severed thyself from us,  
And to others pledged thyself;  
Yet come to us, since the promise  
Of thy constancy is not binding.  
"The nature of patience is more delicate  
Than the disposition;  
Come to me--- my hand and heart  
Are growing numb through lack of use".

Ghalib was an artist and has drawn attractive pictures of the beloved. His matchless art of portrayal is revealed in many ghazals. In one of his ghazals he says:

"One whose conquetry,  
Has the manners of an infidel,  
Has robbed my heart of strength,  
One or high stature with a short tunie.  
"Like sudden death.  
Exceedingly bitter,  
And like sweet life  
Of little constancy.

With curling ringlets.  
Wearing a musk coloured veil:

With the dazzling radiance of her body,  
Wearing a golden mantle.  
When receiving supplications,  
Like Laila scornfully rejecting;  
And in spite of Ghalib,  
Praising Majnun."

Ghalib's ghazals indicate that he had full awareness to such matters as a man had to face in everyday life. In one line he states that learning and scholarship are such that their value cannot be fixed in terms of money or position. He ridicules the social conditions of the time in which people of little understanding occupied the position of authority and power. The line runs:

"Knowledge is independent of position,  
Position is unaware of knowledge,  
Thy gold (worth) is unfit for a touchstone,  
While mine needs no touchstone (to test its worth)."

In another line we find a reference to the fluid social and political conditions of his age. The line runs: "Whatever the gatherer of time,

Seized opening, he gave not back;  
Whatever the writer of Fate wrote secretly,  
He would not erase."

Ghalib's Persian ghazals have great ethical value. According to him man is the best creation; he should not debase himself at any cost; he should not accept gratification which results in self mortification. In one line he states that to a selfless person even the so-called auspicious shadow of Huma causes heaviness. In another line he says that Jamshid is to be followed in that he was a pleasure seeker and not in that he was a personification of pomp and grandeur. Again he gives a new interpretation to the allusions of Alexander and Jamshid. According to him, the former's invention of mirror is based on his self glorification; while the later's introduction of drinking is a healthy contribution to the advancement of human society.

Ghalib was not a mystic; but his poetry specially his ghazals are full of mystical thought. It is to be noted that in the treatment of mystical ideas he has given new and original interpretation. In describing such themes, he has gone to the extent of despising the heavenly pleasures a faithful is destined to enjoy. Some of his lines remind us of an anecdote attributed to the eminent female sufi saint Rabia of Basra. She is stated to pass through the bazar holding a burning candle in one hand and a glass of water in another. On somebody's enquiry she is reported to have retorted that she would like to burn the paradise by the burning candle she was holding and extinguish the fire of hell with the water in the cup so that the people may have sincerity in their prayers. They should worship Allah in the manner. He deserves to be worshipped and not in the hope of obtaining the pleasures of the paradise or securing immunity from the dreadful fire of the hell. One line runs as follows:

"So that none who cherishes his body  
Might fall into the trap;  
I wish there was no grain,  
To bait the snare."

Ghalib was a believer in the theory of unity of soul called "Wahdatul Wajud". For example he says:

"Each smell requires,

A correct sense of smelling;  
The smell coming from the garment (of Joseph)  
Was correctly sensed in Kanan (by Jacob)."

In another line he says:  
"The clue of His unity  
Is found in His diversity,  
To all the countless numbers,  
The common figure is one."

Again he says:

"O glorious manifestation of multicoloured hues,  
Where art thou, after all? Here in this world,  
Whatever sign of Three was given  
Has been wrong, yes, it was wrong".

Ghalib, generally gives philosophical depth to any event he describes. But his ghazals are chiefly characterised by novelty of thought and expression. One can hardly find a line in which his poetic genius is not employed in its full in creating some subtle point in it. One line runs as follows:

"In short, my heart is also  
Inclined towards piety,

But because of the ignominy of the devout,  
I have adopted the state of an infidel."

A new lines from a "continuous" ghazal are as follows:

"The sky is nothing but the smoke of imagination;  
The world is a bewildered dream.

The wilderness is the accumulation of dust of fancy;  
A melted drop has been given the name of limitless ocean.

Spring is but a small fire created by the wind,  
And the scar of the flame has been called autumn.

A foreign land not agreeing to one's temperament  
Is regarded as a native land.

The narrow loop of the snare is the name of the nest."

Ghalib was an artist and he was fully aware that without being associated with original interpretation the hackneyed allusions would lose their charm. This is why we see that the poet has imparted dynamism to the conventional allusions and references. In one of the lines Alexander has been called an embodiment of self glorification, and Jamshid of pleasure and joy. The former is thus detestable while the latter an agreeable personality. The poet gives a reason for sudden arrival of the caravan to the well, what Joseph was confined in this line:

"This should be credited to the power Of Zulaikha's restlessness, That the pathway of the caravan Led to the well where Joseph has been cast."

The poet advances new argument to prove that immunity from death in respect of Khizr, Ilyas and Messiah is a source of despair as against death which is a source of satisfaction in an hour of despair and disappointment.

One of the significant achievements of Ghalib's ghazal writing is that a considerable number of hemistiches and even some verses have grown proverbial and may appropriately be used in illustrating

various facts of life. This indicates that his poetry is most suggestive and has therefore great quality of popular appeal. A new specimens in original may be quoted below:

Perwana-e-charagh mazar-e- Khudeem ma  
Bedar Almulk maani wi kunam farman rawaee ha

Deewar-o-der na sazaad zindaganiyan-e-gham ra  
Aamookhteh ra baz sabq mi kunam imshab

Haft Aasman be gerdish wa ma dermiyaneh een  
Aare duroogh-e-maslihat aameez gufteh and

Rooze ke Siyah Shud sahar-o-sham na darad  
Ghareeb-e-Shahar sukhanha-e-guftani dard.

Ghalib's forceful diction is a special feature of his poetry. He has introduced hundreds of new phrases and expressions which in most cases are his own coinage. This accounts in some degree, for his popularity among his Indian admirers who have a craze for originality of thought and expression. It is also somewhat responsible for his unpopularity among those who have a predilection for simplicity and freshness. A thoughtful poetry with complex imageries loses its appeal specially to the Iranians. Moreover "Indianism" of some of his words and phrases may lose the charm of his poetry to a native Persian.

Ghalib's extraordinary zeal and inquisitiveness for something new and alarming caused him to hold a fictitious work like Dasatir as a genuine and a very important composition. Thus he has freely used in his writings, special prose, such Dasatiri words as had no precedence in Persian. Despite this, his extraordinary capacity for coining new phrases and expressions has added new dimensions to his diction specially in his ghazal writing.

Ghalib has received inspiration from the great masters of Persian ghazal some of whom have been mentioned in his well known statement available in his Kulliyat. It is certain that he has left out the names of some of his predecessors who had also been a source of inspiration to him such as Sadi, Hafiz and others. It may, however, be noted that despite receiving inspiration from the earlier masters he was "capable of striking his own characteristic posture and style of address". It is worthwhile to quote his statement.

"Although genius which is a divine angel, was, at the outset, pleasant spoken and excellent seeker, yet earlier, due to wide stepping it followed in the footsteps of those who did not know the right path and regarded their crooked walking to be a slip caused by intoxication until in its diligent search, the forerunners because of the auspiciousness of the worth of my companionship which they discovered in me, showed me favour and their heart moved out of compassion. They felt sorry for my wanderings and looked upon me as my teacher would look upon. Shaikh Hazin, with his numbed smile exposed my deviation before my eyes, and the venom of the glance of Talib Amuli and lightning of the eyes of Urfi Shirazi burnt the matter of absurd and undesirable movements in my path-treading foot. Zuhuri, with his soul-grasping attention, tied amulet on my arm and provision with my waist, and Naziri, the reckless wanderer caused me to follow his own particular way. Now due to auspiciousness of the attentive fostering care of this group, my dancing pen is a partridge in its graceful walking, pandeanpipe in singing for joy, a peacock in splendour and Anqa in flight."

It must be admitted that despite his glowing tributes to the genius of the great masters of the Mughal regime, whose styles he has followed and in whose metric pattern, he has composed a considerable number of ghazals, it is too much to expect from an individualist and egoist like Ghalib to have

followed any one of them blindly. He has, no doubt, been benefitted by their wisdom and experience: but being conscious of his poetic genius, he never regarded him inferior to any one of them.

### Conclusion

No doubt a lot of time has been passed but still Ghalib is a master of ghazal. No one can deny he is a genius of his time and still remain in the heart of Persian poetry lovers.

As he himself said:

**Hain or bhi dunyan main Sukhanwar bahut achche  
Kehte hain ke Ghalib Ka hai Andaz-e-bayan or**

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