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# A commentary on Ghalib's rejected verses:emotion & its expression

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khavaana nahi hai khat raqm-e-iztiraar ka  
tadbir-e-peech-o-taab-e-nafs kia karay koi

The script of the text that I wrote is illegible How does one remedy the twists and turns of my fevered breath?

Khvana stands for legible (na khvana for illegible); Iztirar for restlessness, involuntary movement, like a tremor; Pech-o tab for twists and turns, anxiety nafas for breath; raqam for a text, that which is written.

On the first reading it seems that the she'r is about a letter that the lover wrote to his beloved. The lover is so charged with emotion that his writing becomes illegible. We are drawn to the word khat and the meaning most familiar to us, that is, letter. But the she'r goes beyond being simply a missive or a love note.

I think the situation depicted in the she'r is that of overpowering emotion, and the desire to express oneself — to the beloved, or to anyone for that matter. The word khat is used here in its original meaning: script, style of writing. The word raqam means 'a text', 'a piece of writing'. So the poet-lover, uncontrollably keen to write and to express himself, starts scribbling on a piece of paper. The force of emotions has made him all aquiver. He's unable to write a legible hand. He's writing in a state of iztirar: helplessness, urgency, involuntariness. His breath is uneven, as often happens when one feels urgently under some emotion or need. So he says: what can I do about the irregular breath which is causing my hand to shake and quiver, rendering my handwriting illegible?

If we consider the theme to be a love letter, we must grant that the she'r takes the idea to another level in the most ingenuous way.

The lover is so agitated that he cannot even write legibly. What is the remedy for his irregular breath? The pech-o tab of his breath complements the twists and turns of his illegible handwriting. It is a beautiful she'r whichever way we read it.

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