SELECTIONS
from the
PERSIAN GHAZALS
of
GHALIB
with translations

into ENGLISH
by
RALPH RUSSELL

into URDU
by
IFTIKHAR AHMAD ADANI

Pakistan Writers' Co-operative Society
In Collaboration With
Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu
Pakistan
1997
CONTENTS

1. A word about this book 5
2. Introduction 7
3. Persian Ghazals with Translations. 8
4. Explanatory Index 142
5. Pas Navish (Post Script) 165
A word about this book

It is a matter of no small satisfaction to me that I was instrumental in bringing two of my very close friends Ralph Russell and If tikhar Ahmad Adani together and making them agree to publish their translations of Ghalib's selected Persian gazals and couplets in one volume. War service brought Ralph to India in early forties where he served with the Indian Army and made his acquaintance with Urdu, the language of the laskhar. Urdu cast its spell on this young military officer and succeeded in claiming his life-long devotion. Ghalib was proud of the military background of his ancestors. He had declared (For generations the profession of my forebears has been military service). So he captivated Lt. Ralph Russell by the charm of his personality, prose and poetry and made him collaborate with the Indian scholar Dr. Khurshidul Islam to produce a superb book titled Ghalib: Life and letters.

Not content with this prose work they decided to translate selected Urdu and Persian gazals of Ghalib into English. While Khurshidul Islam selected Ghalib's couplets, Ralph Russell translated them into English. This book, however, contains the translations as modified, elaborated and finalised by Ralph Russell after the end of his collaboration with Dr Khurshidul Islam a few years back.

Apart from his own love of Ghalib's ghazals, If tikhar Ahmad Adani has a significant ancestral connection with the poet. His great grandfather Nawab Mustafa Khan Shaita was a very trusted friend and admirer of Ghalib. The compliment that Ghalib paid him for his literary taste is absolutely unique: "Ghalib is proud of the fact that he never included a ghazal in his diwan unless it pleased Mustafa Khan."

Like his two elder brothers who were members of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, If tikhar Ahmad Adani joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1950 and served in various capacities until his retirement in 1986. Ghalib has proudly spoken of his induction into the Mughal Civil Service. 'Gone are the days when you complained of not being a servant of the crown.'

The interesting thing about this selection of Ghalib's ghazals is that it combines tributes to his genius by two literary connoisseurs with civil and military backgrounds.
Ifikhar Ahmad Adani's book is a collection of very unusual and pointed articles on Ghalib's relevance to the literary and social problems of our times. It contains translations of half a dozen Persian ghazals of Ghalib which have a character and style of their own.

This volume provides discerning readers with an opportunity to compare how Ghalib's genius inspires two gifted individuals with totally different cultural backgrounds to interpret his poetry. This comparative study will certainly provide a new dimension to one's understanding of Ghalib.

Here I would like to cite only three Persian couplets of Ghalib and show how beautifully they have been translated into Urdu and English by Adani and Russell.

Ghalib:  
کہ گزر گزار کر در جہاد نافذ نہ ہو جانا اسم  
یار آنا مقامی کے سے کل نئی فول گنگے

Adani:  
بیاں جراح ہمارہ نہ ہو جانا اسم  
یار آنا مقامی کے سے ہمارہ نئی فول گنگے

Russell:  
The words I hide within my breast are not those of a preacher  
Words to be spoken at the stake, not spoken from the pulpit

Ghalib:  
بلد خوشبہ کے رحم من جن ہو جانا اسم  
ایمان میں سے کسی کو نئی فول گنگے

Adani:  
بلد خوشبہ کے رحم من جن ہو جانا اسم  
ایمان میں سے کسی کو نئی فول گنگے

Russell:  
In love of you, fair robber, my heart gave you all it had  
The fear of loss, the hope of gain - there are no longer there

Ghalib:  
کر کو رحل کہ کو بہت کو بہت ہو جانا اسم  
کہ کو رحل کہ کو بہت کو بہت

Adani:  
کر کو رحل کہ کو بہت کو بہت ہو جانا اسم  
کہ کو رحل کہ کو بہت کو بہت

Russell:  
Abandon disputations; seek the tavern, for in there  
No one will want to waste his breath on Fadak or Jamal

Does not this comparative study of Ghalib's couplets give a new depth to our understanding of the poet?

The Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, Pakistan is proud to be associated with the Pakistan Writers' Co-operative Society in the production of this volume, a valuable and timely tribute to Ghalib in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the dawn of his genius on this planet.

Jamiuddin Aali  
December, 1997

INTRODUCTION

The history of the present volume is as follows. Over the years from 1969 I worked with Khurshidul Islam to produce an English translation, with introduction and notes, of a selection of couplets from Ghalib's Urdu and Persian ghazals. The selection was made by Khurshid Sahib, modified by me only to the extent that I omitted some couplets which I could not translate adequately and others which I did not think would appeal to an English-reading audience. Khurshid Sahib's explanations enabled me to understand much that I would not have been able to understand without his help and most of the translations were discussed with, and approved by him. Nevertheless the final product is mine. A time came when it became impossible for our collaboration to continue, and since that time I have made further modifications both in the selection and in the translations.

In 1994 I had the good fortune of making the acquaintance of Ifikhar Ahmad Khan Adani. I found that our understanding of Ghalib was gratifyingly similar, and I was very pleased to learn that he had translated into Urdu verse many couplets of Ghalib's Persian ghazals, some of which he recited to me. We then formed the plan of publishing a book which would give side by side the Persian originals of such verses as both he and I had translated, with my English translation and his Urdu translation, and the present volume is the result.

It is proposed to follow this volume with another giving the complete collection of my English translations, and later, if resources permit, with a third volume in which Ghalib's Urdu/Persian original couplets will face my English translation and notes.

Ralph Russell  
December, 1997
Hidden and Manifest, Your way is ever to raise turmoil
Discoursing all the time with all, yet acting far beyond all

Sikandar's power, Sikandar's very life could not win water
Khizar would give his life - to You, his coin is counterfeit

Ali's defeat is light and roses gracing Your assembly
Karbala's tragedy a tune that issues from Your lute

Those whom You frown upon toil on with neither bread nor water
Those whom You favour, sated, are still plied with heavenly food

Nearly all the verses are addressed to God. They stress His apparent indifference to the sufferings of even the best of mankind, like Ali and Husain, and praise His true lovers, who gladly submit to His inescapable will with utter faith in His beneficence.

a God is ever active in working His purpose out, and was so even before he created man. He speaks with all His creation, of which man is only a part, and He is still engaged in work to which the existence or non-existence of man is irrelevant.

b Not all the power of Sikandar, ruler of the world, could avail him to get the water of life, and God withheld it from him to the last. Khizar, having gained eternal life, grew weary of it, and would gladly have surrendered it to God, but God rejects it as though it were counterfeit coin.

c 'Ali's defeat' - all his misfortunes from the death of the Prophet until his eventual murder.

d 'heavenly food' - in the original, mansa, one meaning of which is the table which God let down from heaven, laden with manaz and safwa - food and drink to sustain His chosen people as they journeyed through the wilderness towards the promised land.
Do not discount my tears; eternal wisdom has decreed
That in this flowing stream the seven millstones all revolve

We, ignorant and powerless, maintain our love for You
Intoxicated always, with a wine that does not fail

I owe much to the impact of my loyalty: at least
My way made plain the standards by which others live their lives

I am a free man; joy and pain pass through my heart and do not stay
Wine and pure blood are one to me; my heart is like a sieve to both

---

a The seven millstones are the seven heavens, the revolution of which determines the fate of man. But it is the force of the stream of tears man sheds in his suffering that causes the millstones to revolve. So man himself contributes to the making of his own fate.

b The wine is the wine of love of God. We are powerless and ignorant, but we love You utterly and steadfastly.

c That is, how far short they fall of the standards of conduct which true love demands and which I satisfy.

d Neither great joy nor great suffering deflect me from pursuing calmly my chosen course in life.
I am a huma, but a boon to no man; for I fly so fast
The shadow of my wings goes upwards, rising in the air like smoke

I can bear every blow; my nature is of the most delicate
I am a rock; think of me as a workshop of fine glass

I feel depressed in loyalty, embarrassed by your cruelty
You try to torture me, alas!, so ineffectively!

I solace my despondent heart by holding out the hope of death
But what hope can sustain Khizar, and Isa, and Idris?

I blotted out the world entire when once I closed my eyelashes
Lost to myself I bore away the world with me as well

My eyes and heart are yours; don't ask me
how you should adorn yourself
Does he who longs to pluck the flowers
know anything of gardening?

a Like the huma, I too am an auspicious being. But people who want worldly advancement need not look to me. I am far above such things.
b I combine extreme fortitude with extreme sensitivity, and each quality supports the other. The second line suggests this. Glass is made from rock, and the rock is thus, in a sense, a workshop in which glass is made.
c I must be true to you, but it saddens me that you are so lacking in the skills of a true beloved that I feel ashamed for you.
d All of these had been granted eternal life.
e Your beauty holds my eyes and heart enthralled. I neither know nor care how such beauty is produced.
Without you, just as wine within the glass is parted from it
My soul is in my body, but is not a part of it

Ghalib, it was not by your wish that you attained this rank
Poetry came itself and asked if it might be your craft

My longing for the roses' beauty was so dear to me
I turned to blood to show myself the beauties of the spring

All my concern is with myself; my heart is full of me
I am a host of keen regrets for all I could not do

In loving one like you it is myself that I oblige
Complaint to you expresses all the thanks I give to me

I, and myself reflected in imagination's mirror
Are one, and one who constantly confronts another one
Each time my gourd is filled with wine sueti ecstasy possesses me
I think an end has come to all the helplessness of life.

To put it briefly, my heart too inclines to piety: but then
I saw the way the 'good' behaved, and fell in with the infidels.

I do not grieve if in men's eyes I seem to be a beggar
Within the realms of meaning it is Ghalib's writ that runs

Give me a wine that, poured into the cup
Is strong enough to make the cup go round

All that these cruel times inflict upon me
I think of as proceeding from your heart

She full of rage - and Ghalib asking kisses
Love never knows what is the proper time

---

My sufferings are caused by the age I live in, but I think of them as cruelties inflicted on me
by you because I love you. And this thought enables me to bear them gladly.
Such is my love that she alone can cast a spell on me
I make her think that someone else can cast a spell on me

Speak of the joy of gazing, and I am at once your friend
Hint at a supple waist, and you can cast a spell on me

Just speak of wine; you can at once plunge me in fantasy
I see the fruit; the branch's flower can cast a spell on me

I tell a tale; my own heart's pain is evident in it
The merest motion of her head can cast a spell on me

The night of parting knows no dawn; yet for a little while
Talk of the dawn; maybe your words will cast a spell on me

True love is in my nature, Ghalib. Even so, no claim
That true love melts a fair one's heart can cast its spell on me

---

a  I do so to arouse her jealousy, and make her more attentive to me.
b  I already experience the joy that is yet to come.
c  I can interpret that as a sign that my story moves her.
You cannot think my life is spent in waiting? Well then, come!
Seek no excuses; arm yourself for battle and then come!

These meagre modes of cruelty bring me no joy. By God!
Bring all the age's armory to use on me, and come!

Why seek to slay your lovers by your awesome majesty?
Be even more unbridled than the breeze of spring, and come!

You broke with me; and now you pledge yourself to other men
But come! The pledge of loyalty is never kept. So come!

Parting and meeting - each of them has its distinctive joy
Leave me a hundred times; turn back a thousand times, and come!

The mosque is all awareness. Mind you never go that way
The tavern is all ecstasy. So be aware, and come!

---

a The lover tells her to come, and see for herself - and this of course ensures that he no longer has to wait!

b The lover's sufferings are inflicted partly by his mistress and partly by the hard times in which he lives. He says, Add these too to your own armory. Only if you inflict upon me all the suffering you can shall I know the joy of bearing it.

c Awareness of the demands of conventional life contrasted with awareness of the things that matter.
If you desire a refuge, Ghalib, there to dwell secure
Find it within the circle of us reckless ones, and come!

My home became a desert, and the desert more enchanting
For walls and doors do not agree with prisoners of love

Hail wine! and flowing Zindarud, and this fine life we live!
Would you die thirsty-lipped among religions' mirages?

Thirsty, there on the river's bank I will give up my life
If I suspect its ripples are the creases on its brow

The night of parting stretches on beyond endurance. Come!
For one glimpse of your face I'll give a thousand years of life

From love I graduated to become a king's companion
I marvel at the skill with which the world has cheated me

---

a manqab, translated here in the sense of 'way of life', can also mean 'sweet water
b I would rather die than accept anything given unwillingly.
c 'graduated' is ironic.
The lute, the cup, the melody, the wine - all kindle fire
The salamander knows; ask him the way to my assembly

Without the joy your cruel wrath brings to me I should die
Think, then! Why is it I complain against you without cause?

Ghalib, the love of wine is in your nature, for the cup
From which you drink it takes your pedigree back to Jamshed

Hid in the universe, we are the universe's essence
Lost as the drop is lost within the river's flowing stream

There on the road, lost to the world, I sit and find another world
For every man, lost to himself, that goes that way encounters me

I think they may stay here and rest, where there is shade and water
My valued friends are travellers that I have left behind

a  It was believed that the salamander lived in fire.
b  That is why! My baseless complaints make you angry, and your anger is a joy to me.
c  'Hid'- because the world does not see and recognise our value.
d  Every selfless person is the kin of every other such person.
e  I go ever forward to new goals. They have no such compelling urge to go on and on.
You are the sum of all the graces of the spring, unending
*Your* fragrance comes to me from every flower that I smell

Ghalib, enough! You cannot be a burden to your friends
So let the poetry you write be written for yourself

She wears a dress of *katan*, and in her simplicity
With every breath condemns the moonlight for exposing her

Let me be blunt; my lips thirst for your kiss and your embrace
Clear from my path the net of all your subtle kindnesses

The world holds wine and beauty in such measure, you would think
God sent into the world first Adam, and then paradise

If wine is banned, the Holy Law does not prohibit wit
No praise when I excel? Well then, no censure when I sin

---

*a* Moonlight does that to *katan* and there is no sense in upbraiding it for doing what it cannot help doing. Also 'moon' is a standard metaphor for a beautiful woman. It is she herself, her own beauty, that has this effect. The picture is that of a beauty so great that nothing can adequately conceal it.
Ghalib has cut all ties with life. Henceforth his one desire
Is to retire into his niche and there to worship God

To measure out the wine has been declared unlawful, saki. Come! a
And dash your flask to pieces on the wine-cup in my hand.

The world holds rich and poor - and those are proud
and these are helpless
So, Ghalib, shun the company of rich and poor alike

Her qualities are many, and my love is pledged to every one
What wonder if her anger only strengthens my desire?

The lightning cannot be content to occupy a single place
What wonder if harsh thoughts of her cannot dwell in my heart?

a Wine should be poured, and no account taken of how much the drinker asks.
b Do not be proud, and do not resign yourself either to what life brings you. Exert yourself to
the full, and do whatever little you can do to change your fate.
Go out and find some wanderer, strayed from the beaten track
You may find one whose high resolve stirs tumult in the world

In the world's glass, see, manifest and hidden both are mirrored
Your thought cannot embrace them? Be content to gaze on them

Meaning eludes you? Be content with what your eyes can see!
Look for fair women's coiling tresses and exulting pride

How long must we be mirrors longing for the sight of you?
Come forth in all your radiance. Enslave us with a glance

Look in the scar of yearning and see bliss reflected there
You seek the brightest night? Then go and find the darkest day

Hold fast the little time you have and learn to treasure it
Spring mornings are not in your grasp? Then seek the moonlit night

a, b What cannot be fully understood may nevertheless be enjoyed. And increased understanding may come with enjoyment.

c You cannot appreciate the full extent of joy unless you have also experienced the full extent of sorrow.
I slept; she came into my dreams, her tunic open, drunk with wine
I cannot tell what spell my love had cast on her last night

This garden does not match the one that blooms within my breast
No heart can flower that has not been laid open by your sword

My life is ending; she is still intent on cruelty
They say the fair cannot be constant; how can that be so?

Paradise is no salve to heal the sadness of my heart
It was not made to match the desolation that is me

I die for her - and fear that she (such are her doubts of me)
May think I wash my hands of life because I yearn for peace

I gaze at her; she thinks it is because I have no shame
She turns away; I think it is because she feels too shy

a She is so shy that she does not normally appear before me even in a dream.
b She is constant - constant in cruelty.
c She assumes that my motives are bad. I assume that her motives are good. (And probably we are both wrong!)
Better go boldly forward, and not fear what you must face
The river's depths are Salsabil, the river's surface, fire

Come out! The spring has come! See how the flowers all in bloom
Reveal their forms more boldly than the city's courtesans

She hears my grief, and for a while retires into herself
What captivating sympathy! What artless mastery!

The object of creation was mankind, and nothing else
We are the point round which the seven compasses revolve

All pleasures and all griefs that come, come linked to one another
The bright day sends dark night away, and then itself departs

Don't hurry on; stay, raise and kiss
the dust of those who knew the way
A thousand such as you have passed along the path of poetry

---
a She presents a picture of compassion for me, but this is really a means of captivating me all the more.
b i.e. the seven skies, whose revolution determines the course of events.
Each atom gazes on the radiant beauty of the One
East, west, south, north, above, below - mirrors on every side

What can I do? I must accept the fowler's callousness
I'll think the circle of the snare the circle of my nest

Your feet are trapped in snares your fancy lays for them. In truth
Each world tells you the story of another world beyond

The springtime comes, and breaks the bridle of your self-possession
- The rose's every vein a whip to lash the steed of love

Ghalib, don't ask again why I wander so restless
I said, My forehead seeks a threshold to bow down upon

I do not blame the flower-seller; he plies his trade. I burn
To see the garden's guardian fired with ardour to despoil it

a  Be content with what you cannot change.
b  Addressed to those who have not developed the power to see things as they are, and so see beyond things as they are.
c  There is no one, and no cause, to evoke the love and commitment of which I am capable, and which I yearn to give.
d  How outrageous, that those who profess to cherish and uphold higher values in fact pander to those whose only concern is with material gain and worldly advancement.
What fate’s decree denied a man, no man would ask from fate
The shaikh’s cup did not look for wine: we asked for wine - no more

One, struggling, drowns; another’s slakes his thirst in Dajla’s stream
Neither one harmed the other; neither sought the other’s aid

High rank does not know learning: learning does not need high rank
Your touchstone never knew our gold: nor our gold your touchstone

That which he seizes openly no governor returns
That which fate’s scribe writes secretly can never be erased

Drunk with heart’s blood, not wine, our drunkenness requires no cup
Our heart’s lament’s a melody - a song that needs no lute.

Abandon disputations: seek the tavern; for in there
No one will want to waste his breath on Fadak or Jamal

---

a We asked for wine - knowing that those who drink wine can expect this and nothing more than this.
b Every man encounters his own fate, and goes to it alone.
c The learned and the cultured do not seek the approval of the powerful, knowing that the powerful have no idea what true learning and culture are.
d It is pointless to hope for what experience shows to be impossible.
e Go to the tavern, where you drink the wine of true religion, and turn your back on pointless disputations. Fadak and Jamal refer to disputes between eminent personalities in the early history of Islam. In each of these, members of the Shia sect support one party and members of the Sunni sect the other.
To dissolutes like us to worship God would be no burden
But she, our idol, will not share the tribute due to her

I bore it all, and easily: it was not helplessness
If I did not ask fate for compensation due to me

I have a heart more delicately structured than the blister
I set my foot down softly, for the thorn is delicate

When I lament, don't pride yourself upon your heart of stone
Think how the mountain's strength derives from stuff most delicate

It grieves her that I bear so patiently her cruelty
So now I will complain, because her heart is delicate

a  'it' - i.e. the sufferings inflicted by the beloved. The ordinary man would demand redress on Judgement Day; for the lover this is out of the question. It is his pride and joy in the strength of his love, not cowardice and timidity, that keeps him silent.

b  I do not fear the pain it will cause me as it pierces my blistered feet. I put my foot down so softly that the thorn does not pierce it, because I fancy that it pains the thorn to do so.

c  The mountain provides the raw material from which glass is made. So your heart too may one day be transformed into something delicate enough to be affected by my grief.
The beauty of her form was captured in the river's water
Now, mirror-like, the river has forgotten how to flow

My heart has slain me! Those it loved were ever cruel to it
It saw their sweet deceptions and said, 'These are kindesses!'

You give me now good tidings of the coming of the huma
But I am free - its shade will be a burden on my head

What comfort is there in complaint that does not reach your ears?
Alas for all those hopes I had - they are no longer there

I can beguile my heart if you will promise to be cruel
The pride I felt that you were true - that is no longer there

In love of you, fair robber, my heart gave you all it had
The fear of loss, the hope of gain - these are no longer there

---

Once I would have rejoiced in my good fortune. Now I value much more highly my freedom from all such ambitions.
Lost to themselves, they doze, reclining there in Tuba's shade
Is this the high resolve of men who set out before dawn?

Turmoil attracts me; what is this good news of paradise?
I see things clearly; pious sermons are no use to me

You promise it, and no one may dispense it
where's the sense in that?
It is not life that, given once, cannot be given again - it's wine!

Glad tidings! There'll be streams of honey, palaces of emerald
The thing that will fulfil my heart's desire is this - there will be wine!

Lahrasp, where has your glory gone? And Parvez, where are you?
The fire-temples are empty, and the taverns desolate.

---

a. No one who wants to attain all that a human being is capable of is content to accept paradise as the end of the road.

b. 'Turmoil' - all that goes on in this world. I see clearly all that goes on in this world, and desire nothing else. I need no alluring promises of paradise to keep me happy. The key word in the second line of the Persian, translated as 'clearly' is beghar, which can mean both 'without illusion' and 'without desire.'

c. The 'it' throughout refers to wine. Man will have wine in paradise, but may not drink it here in this world.

d. Alas that the coming of orthodox Islam destroyed so much of the beauty and the joy of life in pre-Islamic Iran.
Nothing disturbed its tenour; on and on, and to no end
Khizar's long life? An item on a list, and nothing more

The liveliness of my own thought is me, from top to toe
My being's warp and woof is constant movement - nothing more

Shine forth! - and I will not be in your debt. I am the atom
And you, with all your beauty, are the sun, and nothing more

Yes, colour, charm, significance it has - but I must say
That Ghalib's verse is only a selection - nothing more

Brought to the city from the west, it is abundant here
Your faith will buy a draught of it; wine is no longer dear

The lamp holds only dregs of oil, the wine-cup only lees
None of the joys of night remain - and now my guest has come!

\[ a \quad A \text{ life without struggle is no life at all, not even if, like Khizar's, it never ends.} \\
\[ b \quad \text{True, you are the sun, and I am only a particle of dust. But if the particle shines in the sun's light, it owes no debt to the sun. The sun is only doing what it is there to do.} \\
\[ c \quad \text{ 'only a selection' - implies a complaint that he has not produced all that he was capable of. But \textit{entikhab}, besides 'selection', can also mean 'the choicest, the cream, the best, the most outstanding', and Ghalib is implying, 'Yes, it's an \textit{entikhab} - in this sense too.'} \\
\[ d \quad \text{Give up formal religion and drink the wine of true religion.} \]
Beauty and wine have left me, and, content with poetry
I've planted willows in a garden that is desolate

I cannot bring onto the page all that is in my heart
In the assembly flowers are few - and in the garden, many

She does not feel her lovers' pain? Yet she must be forgiven
She steals hearts without knowing it - and that excuses her

We did not know the full force of the strong wine of her beauty
We were misled by seeing how the Brahman was unmoved

All know the power of sighs and lamentation; but don't fear
My struggle with myself still keeps me fully occupied

---

a Poetry is now my only source of joy. Beautiful women and wine are like a garden in flower, but these I no longer have. Poetry is compared to the willow - a tree that bears no fruit.

b The beloved is the lover's idol, and the Brahman worships idols. We saw that he was unaffected by the idol's beauty, and thought that we too could withstand the influence of her beauty. Alas that we forget that the Hindu Brahman, like the Muslim shahib, does not love the god he worships. We have the capacity to love - and should have known that our idol's beauty was bound to enslave us in love's bonds.

c The lover tells his beloved: 'Don't fear that my sighs and laments will melt your heart. I have no power to sigh. All my strength is engaged in the struggle I wage within myself.'
Her battleground is one on which you cannot carry weapons
And her assembly one in which you cannot speak of wine
Your courage will not aid you here; the lightning flashes fast
Here you must be a moth, not seek to be a salamander
The trials of life are over - why complain of cruelty?
What if you suffered? Can you speak of it on Judgement Day?
We travel fast and do not seek the water and the shade
Don't speak to us of Tuba's tree and Kausar's flowing stream
The words I hide within my breast are not those of a preacher
Words to be spoken at the stake, not spoken from the pulpit
How strange it felt to be involved in dealings with this madman!
Ghalib is not a Muslim, nor is he an infidel

a The arena of love has its own rules. She is not to be resisted, and not to be cajoled.
b The lightning flame of love strikes fast, and you have not time to resist it. In any case the lover gives his all for love as the moth immolates himself in the candle's flame. It was believed that the salamander lives and thrives in fire, but he is no model for the true lover.
c The trials of life are pro-eminently the trials of love. It is the beloved's nature, and her proper role in life, to suffer, so she has nothing to say for God's will. In any case no true lover complains of his beloved's cruelty. In a more general sense, the trials of love afflict you by God's will, and you do not complain against God.
d Ours is a never-ending quest.
e My unspoken message to humankind is one which, if I spoke it, would send me to the gallows.
f Ghalib is possessed by the madness of love, and lovers are unique. They cannot be fitted into any of the recognised categories.
You manifestly steal my heart - and yet not manifestly
You know that I suspect you - and that you are not suspect

Though I would speak my love, the body of my thought is dumb
From top to toe I speak to you - and yet I do not speak

All you command I do, and all I do proceeds from you
Seen and unseen my work moves on - and yet does not move on

The flowering garden grieves me - spring has come, and will not last
The furnace pleases me: autumn is here - and is not here

The value of each drop that merges in the ocean's stream
Accumulates - for it is lost; and yet is not lost

A new creation comes each time you close your eyelashes
The eye thinks, 'This is just the same' - It is not just the same

---

a ...not manifestly, ...not suspect. That is, I know, with absolute certainty, but there is nothing to show to the world at large.
b You inspire all I do, and yet in my main effort - the effort to win your love - I make no headway at all.
c The withered leaves and flowers burn constantly in the flames of the furnace - and the furnace burns constantly, whatever the season. I rejoice, therefore, that at least something in this changing world is constant. The bright flames of the furnace display an eternal autumn.
d Every individual is part of humanity at large and contributes to its greatness. The drop merged in the ocean in a sense becomes the ocean.
e At every moment something new comes to birth. The eye may not see it, but it is so.
The roses surge within the branch, driven by the force of spring
Like wine still held within the flask - concealed, yet not concealed

Here in this vale where even Khizar has no power to guide me
My legs fail; yet I drag myself along and will not sleep

Because I love you utterly, the pride I feel is boundless
A beggar, in the shadow of a palace wall, asleep

On doomsday these will rise disgraced who passed their lives complaining
Of pain that has no cure, and, still lamenting, fell asleep

The wind blows hard, the night is dark, the stormy waves are rising
The anchor's chain is broken, and the captain is asleep

His rosary, his prayer mat and his cloak - my heart fears for them
The robber lies awake here, and the holy one asleep

---

a You know that the wine is there in the flask even though you cannot see it. You know that roses will flower on the branch even though there is as yet nothing to be seen.

b The true lover does not complain.

c Sarcasm at the holy one's expense. The thief knows what he is doing, but the holy one cannot even summon the alertness to safeguard his property, and do what he has to do.
Look from afar, and do not seek the company of monarchs
The door is open - at the gate a dragon lies asleep

Look at me sleeping - all who have the power to see can see it
I lead the caravan, though in the inn I lie asleep

What if the road is safe now, and the Kaba lies before me?
My mount can go no further, and my legs have gone to sleep

I am a lover; what have name and fame to do with me?
The case is special, what have general rules to do with me?

He who drinks wine unceasingly, alone with his beloved
Knows well the worth of hours and of streams of paradise

We who are crushed by grief drink wine to heal the pain of grief
What have 'permitted' and 'forbidden' things to do with us?

a 'The door'- the Persian word means the small door at the side of a main gate. This may be open, but don't fail to notice that right beside it a dragon guards the main gate.

b This present joy is at least as good as the promised future joys of paradise - even if one accepts that there will be such joys.

c In any case the use of things normally 'haram' is permitted in the treatment of sickness.
The darkness of the day has banished all the fear of night
Dawn never comes; how then should I know when the night has come?

You say 'The cage is welcome. I can spread my wings in it'
But what can cure the hurt you suffered held fast in the snare?

Good conduct is from You; we do not ask to be rewarded
And if we sin, that is Your doing. Why then take revenge?

If Ghalib has not sold his cloak and his Quran together
Why is he asking us, What is the price of ruby wine?

a. Do not forget the experience, and the lessons of past suffering in present relative comfort.
   The suggestion is also here that security bought at the price of loss of freedom is bought too dearly.
In India, drunk and little-known, lives one whose craft is poetry
Within this ancient temple there is one who drinks unceasingly

They say of you you grant your favour to the simple-minded
It is maturity that fills me with this foolish hope

I passed my life without you: gauge the keenness of my suffering
Ignore my death - that is thing that comes when it will come

There in the Kaba who will fill my cup with purest wine?
If he asks payment, I can pawn the robes of pilgrimage

Pure wine comes from the west, and beauties come from Tartary
Baghdad and Bastam? These are the names that do not signify

Who says my verse is so inspired it brings God's message to mankind?
Yet you and God can surely say my verse is nonetheless inspired

---
a I am naive enough to think that you will be kind to me. But that shows my maturity. People tell me that it is to the naive that you are kind. I have the maturity to grasp this, and so make myself naive. But it is a naive and foolish hope I entertain!

b People lament a friend's death - which comes naturally and inevitably. The ought to feel more keenly for the life-long sufferings he has endured, which were in no way inevitable and were deliberately inflicted.

c I know that the great mystics Junaid and Bayazid came from Baghdad and Bastam, but what are these to me? My concern is with good wine and with beautiful women.
The joy of true philosophy is wine drawn from Your cask
The sorceries of Babylon a chapter from Your book

Speak of the cup and mirror, not Sikandar and Jamshed
All that has come to every age is here in our own time

You, who are lost in wonder at the poets of the past
Do not deny my claims because I live in your own time

Clad as she is my mistress makes her way right to my heart
What need is there to loose the ties and let her robe fall from her?

Dreams are to hearten those whose gaze wanders from face to face
What need has he to dream who gazes spellbound upon yours?

---
a  Those who seek the truth about the universe and those who practise magic are both Your servants, acting in accordance with Your will.
b  Jamshed is said to have invented the wine cup and Sikandar the mirror. Don't romanticise the past or overrate the importance of particular figures in it. Rejoice that all that the past has achieved has been inherited by the present.
c  Men who are still in search of the ideal beloved may at any rate catch a glimpse of it in their dreams. I do not need to dream.
Abstinence only heightens their concern to fill their bellies
The bustle of the meals is all; Ramzan's of no account

You who seek worldly ends, rejoice! Your struggles
count for nothing
Our freedom, and your bondage are alike of no account

The cup that gives the zest to life goes ever round and round
Riot of spring is everywhere; autumn's of no account

Come Ghalib, break free from illusions' bonds. I swear by God
This world, and this world's good and bad - all are of no account

How long will you be deaf to me while I tell of myself
In story after story in which nothing is said twice?

Do not despise me if I stumble as I journey on
Don't think me strange if I go headlong making my own way

a i.e. of no account to God.
b Both couplets (a,b) have a similar theme. God - the only true reality - is immune to the
effects of anything men do.
c The lover tells his mistress stories of love; each story is of a different experience, and yet
each experience is his. He hopes that she will soon realise that it is himself he is speaking of.
d The important thing is that, inspired by love, I make my own way in life, undeterred by any
obstacle.
From lamentation's warp and woof I weave myself a veil
From smoke that rises from my heart I make a fragrant tress
From wounds and scars I make a scene of tulips and of roses
From hills, her canopy; from wastes her hall of audience

Through pain and passion friend and minstrel come to comfort me
From thorns and rock I make myself a pillow and bed

I took the Brahmin's path and have pursued it to the limit
Come Ghalib, open up again the path that Azar trod

Your message brings us all the joy that seeing you could give
To see? To hear? - your lovers cannot tell the difference

My strong desire will bring the wine into the cup tonight
And will not know the need to ask the cup-bearer to pour it

---

a, b, c, d. There is a single mood pervading these three verses, with Ghalib asserting in various ways that the things which life ought to give him, but which it denies him, he can create out of his own internal resources.

a. 'a veil' - i.e. the beloved's veil - alluring because her beauty lies behind it. The black, coiling, pungent smoke that rises from his distressed and burning heart is transformed in his imagination into the black coiling fragrant trees of his beloved.

b. The gaping wound is regularly compared with rose in bloom, and the black scar of separation with the black markings in the centre of the tulip.

d. The Brahmin worships idols as the lover worships his beloved. I have loved and worshipped to the limit, says Ghalib. Now I will revive Azar’s art and make an idol representing my beloved more beautiful than anyone has ever made before.
In my dark nights they brought me the good tidings of the morning
Put out the candles, turning me towards the rising sun

They showed their faces, and at once my babbling tongue
was silenced
They took my heart away from me, and gave me eyes to see

They burnt the fire-temples, and breathed their fire into my spirit
Cast idols down, and let the conches sound in my lament

They plucked the pearls that once had decked the banner
of their kings
And gave me them to scatter from the treasury of my pen

Prised from their crown, they set the jewels
in my crown of wisdom
All that men saw them take away, they secretly gave back

The wine they took as tribute from the worshippers of fire
They gave to me one Friday in the month of Ramazan

---

a Their faces - i.e. the beautiful faces of those one loves, once seen, show how utterly
inadequate words are to describe them. And to fall in love is to become able to perceive all
reality clearly for the first time.

The remaining verses lament the passing of the glory and the beauty of ancient,
pre-Islamic Iran, where fire was worshipped, wine was drunk, there were idols in the temples,
and the blowing of conches accompanied worship. Ghalib claims he is the heir to all this,
and that his poetry has the power to re-create it. In the first couplet on p. 70 'tongue' implies a tongue
able to speak the pure Persian of pre-Islamic times. Ghalib prided himself on this ability.

b Defiant contravention of the requirements of orthodox Islam. Friday, the day of
congregational prayer, is the most important day in the week. Ramazan (pronounced here
'Ramazan' to fit the metre) with its month-long fasting is the most important month of the
year.
From all they took in booty from the treasures of Iran
They gave to me a tongue in which to utter my lament

I sit content among the preacher's flock; there is no music here
But after all he speaks of lute and viol and aloes' fragrance

Would that I too could be appeased by such fair words of favour!
How light at heart the fool is as he comes from her assembly!

See how men vie with one another, seeking His approval
See in what ways they set themselves to realise their aim

The father goes unhesitating into Namrud's fire
The son lies down and bares his throat beneath his father's knife

Ghalib, rejoice! These baseless hopes, these thoughts of coming pleasures
Are non-existent threads that weave the tapestry of life

a He speaks to condemn them!
b.c 'The father' - Ibrahim. 'The son' - Ismail.
d The ability to live in fantasy is an essential part of the ability to live.
Ghalib, you must not wear a cloak soiled with hypocrisy.
That cloak alone is clean that has been washed in purest wine.

I am a writer, poet, drinker, friend - and much besides.
So be it if my sad lament can never touch your heart.

Faith? Unbelief? The grime of the illusion of existence.
Cleanse yourself! - and your unbelief will then become your faith.

I talk to her about my grief; she thinks I talk of joy.
My day is dark; she thinks it is the shadow of her wall.

My lord desires to enter on his heritage of paradise.
Alas, if he cannot trace back his ancestry to Adam!

---

a If my poetry doesn't move you, reflect that I am much more than just a poet, and find at any rate something to admire in me! There is a hint that if she can learn to appreciate and respond to a part of him, she may one day come to respond to him for all he is.

b You think of yourself as separate from the rest of God's creation, and pride yourself on being a follower of the true religion. But God is in everything. God is everything. He created 'infidels' and 'believers' alike, and values them alike. And 'infidels' who love Him are as one with 'believers' who love Him. Realise this. Cease to regard yourself as essentially different from them, and your 'unbelief' - i.e. what you think of as unbelief - will become faith.

c I feel my sorrows keenly. She thinks that lovers are supposed to find joy in the sorrows of love, and thinks I do find it. I feel like one deprived of the light of the sun. She thinks I do not want the sunlight, preferring to sit in the shade of her wall.
'You should on no account drink wine', they said
That was a lie told in a worthy cause

You reign with effort: I submit with ease
They speak of you: they also speak of me

My deep despair knows nothing of successive nights and days
The day is passed in darkness; it has neither dawn nor dusk

You make my every particle of dust dance with desire
The frenzy of true love goes on forever, without end

Nightingales in the garden; moths drawn into her assembly
See! Lovers have no peace of mind even with their beloved

---
a The second line is a direct quotation from the first story of the Gulistan of Sadi, where two ministers - one good and one bad - accompany the king on a visit to a prison. A man condemned to death rails at the king in a language he does not understand. He asks the good minister what the man has said. The minister says, 'He said that the Qur'an declares that God will be merciful to the merciful.' The other minister tells the king what the man really said, whereupon the king praises the first minister for his 'lie told in a worthy cause.' The words have become proverbial.

b My fame and renown is no less than yours - and I am even more deserving of fame than you.
I never said God is the source of all our suffering - yet God, in this age in which you live, is not kind to mankind.

I am a poet, not a theologian.
And wine-stained clothes are no disgrace to poetry.

Bring him, if there be any here that knows my tongue:
A stranger to your city has something to say.

Despair of You is unbelief: that is not pleasing to You.
You cry with pain because the thorn has pierced your foot.

See how the sky Strokes off the head of Al's son Husain and set it on the lance.

The sky sits upon the throne to rule as Caliph over all Kalim in sheep's dress and sends him out to roam the wastes.

b. ‘I.e. take God’s will.

a. ‘I.e. the sky.
Father, do not dispute with me. Just look at Azar's son
None who has eyes to see can follow in his father's path

My joy is all in my lament. I feel no jealousy
I want the thorns along the way to pierce my dear friends' feet

When I am dead, I conjure you, remember how I died
Remember how my corpse lay all unshrouded in your lane

I was not one of those whose death made no stir in the world
Remember how the pious wept and Brahmins made lament

Ask how the men of feeling mourned me in harmonious song
Remember how the men of culture wrote their elegies

Ask any man the sum of all my loyalties to you
Remember all the cruelties you practised upon me

---

a 'My dear friends' is ironic. I want my well-meaning, insensitive friends to experience what love means.
b I was mourned by the guardians of both mosque and temple - not presented here in an unfavourable light.
c,d Ask - because anyone can tell you.
Say what my soul saw, seeing your intoxicated eyes
Remember what passed in my head, seeing your coiling tress

My heart, bring me some sign plucked from the roses of hope’s garden
You cannot bring a flower in bloom? Bring me an autumn leaf

Companion of my begging days, get up and go out quickly
Pawn anything - your life, your clothes - and bring abundant wine

O God, You have brought forth all this from what was non-existent
a Bring me a kiss or two, brought from the corner of her mouth

a. In poetic convention the beloved's mouth is so dainty as to be almost non-existent, but at any rate it does exist. When You could bring forth all the universe out of nothing, can You not produce even a couple of kisses from her mouth?
Yes, my wise friend, you know the road that takes you to the desert
Bring me the candle that the desert wind cannot put out

The water of this vale is salt and bitter: show your bounty
Go to the town and bring me the sweet water that flows there

I know that you have gold, that you have access to high places
If the king will not give me wine, go buy it from the shop

The wine shop gives it in a gourd? Then take it and get going
The king bestows a jar of it? Then hoist it on your back

Sweet basil springs from the green flask; the wine sings
as you pour it
Let your eyes feast on it, listen intently to its song

Ply me assiduously with wine, that I may lose awareness
Play music to me, that I may return to consciousness

All seven couplets are to be taken together. Someone - not Ghalib (as the last couplet shows) - is asking a friend to bring the wine, and (in the last couplet) the poetry that makes life worth living, and not to stint whatever effort it may cost to supply these things.

a 'the desert' - i.e. my ruined home. 'the candle' - wine, which, like the candle, gives brightness and warmth.
b 'Sweet water...' The original can also mean: 1) an antidote to poison, and 2) the water of life.
c Sweet basil, which is fragrant as well as beautiful.
If Ghalib, God grant him long life, cannot himself come with you
Bring me at least a ghazal or a verse he has composed

That lightning that burnt lovers' hearts is cold; her heart is wounded (a)
Those hands, once red with blood, lack even henna's redness now (b)

She who in solitude would not ask even God to hear her
Goes now to everyone to tell the harshness of her fate

That breast, once hidden from men's eyes as life hides in the body
Shines now through tattered garments she has rent in love's despair (c)

Her eyes still shine, she burns still with the fire that is her nature
Her weeping eyes shed pearls, and fire is in the sighs she breathes

Each day, in hope to move him, she reads Ghalib's verses to him (d)
Do not find fault with her: just see what wisdom she displays!

This whole ghazal portrays a beloved who has now herself fallen in love, and experiences for the first time the kind of pain which she herself has been accustomed to inflict.

(a) Women stain their hands with henna when there are joyful occasions (such as weddings) to celebrate.

(b) She was once so proud and self-sufficient that she felt she needed nothing, even from God.

(c) The brightness of her eyes once struck her lovers down; now their brightness comes from the tears in them. Her fire was once that of power and anger; now it comes from a heart burning with anguish.

(d) When Ghalib's verses were addressed to her, she dismissed them. Now she realises how powerful they are and uses them in the hope that they will move her beloved as they never moved her.

84
What can you do with one who hides herself in her own home? What can you do with loves in which nothing is happening?

She takes your heart and soul when you insist on giving it What can you do then, when she thinks you are in debt to her?

It is not true you cannot find the pathway through the waste What can you do with those who turn away and will not see?

Ghalib, the task of kings is to ensure that justice rules What can you do with one whose rule ensures the opposite?

He made injustice serve the need of men's desire for beauty Shed blood that it might be the rouge adorning the world's face

O God, why waste the gift of paradise upon the pious? They never felt love's cruelty. Their hearts were never crushed

---

a. Beauty exists to inspire love and turmoil in the world. A love to which nothing is happening means one in which the beloved never appears.

b. The blood of the martyrs adorns the pages of history.
Last night when I prepared to pray there came into my ears
A warning spoken from the cloak I wore upon my back

"You, a mere straw burnt in the fire of the muezzin's voice
Pause! Do not give your eager heart to these activities

You cannot put your trust in scholars or in worshippers
One vainly prattles on, the other labours vainly on

Words, words are all the stock in trade of this censorious tribe
Mere colour are the ways of those who wear the dark blue cloak

So leave the highway, roam the wastes, and as you journey on
Shun all the hidden snares of wine and love; remain aware

Rapt beauty offers easy kisses? Mind you do not take them
Wine-sellers offer their wine cheap? Then do not buy from them

This poem of 18 couplets (88-92) is a connected whole and is a sort of manifesto of Ghalib's beliefs. The full meaning of some of the couplets is not entirely clear, but taken as a whole, it is forceful and unambiguous. The first four couplets stress the inadequacy, if not the actual harmfulness, of looking to theology or the conventional religious life for an adequate code of living.

The remaining couplets say, in effect, Turn your back on orthodox religion. Forget yourself completely, but use all your resources to assimilate what is valuable in every deep experience, neither giving yourself up to the easy, thoughtless enjoyment of love and wine nor rejecting what is to be learnt from those who sincerely, and not hypocritically, obey the letter of the religious law. There is a creative power at work in the universe which will help you to reach a stage when all significant human experience, both of pleasure and of pain, appears to you, not in different hues, but as a single clear, transparent reality - a reality which you can assimilate within yourself, but which cannot be described in words.
The song, 'Do not obey the law, and do not live austerely'
The warning voice, 'Do not disgrace yourself. Do not drink wine'

All these 'Do nots' amount to only this, 'Forego your being
We have no tale to tell you, you no tale to listen to.'

I, empty-handed (for I had not earned the wage of worship)
Said (heart rich with the wealth bestowed on me from the unseen)

'How shall I turn my face from colour to transparency?
Where must I go?' The voice said, 'Hide yourself from your own gaze.'

I leapt up, but with wit and wisdom going on before me
I left myself, but knowledge, action, kept me company

I came to an assembly where I saw, both in one moment
Today's wine being poured, the blood-drenched sleep of yesterday
A hermitage all radiance, whence abstinence was banished
A hall all sweet spring water, full of kisses, full of wine

That hall the secret dwelling place of her who gave it beauty
Who welcomes turmoil, looks up to the sky with open arms

A sun, imparting radiance to every glittering atom
A saki drunk with wine, intoxicating all the world

Colours sprung from transparency, such that no eye can see them
Secrets that only silence speaks, such as no ear can hear

No drop falls from the vat that holds a thousand colours in it
One vat all filled with surging colours, mouth securely sealed

God can be felt entire; the mind can comprehend the world
Ghalib be silent now. This is a song no voice can sing
My hot sighs raised a canopy: I said, This is the sky
My eyes beheld a troubled dream: I said, This is the world

My fancies threw dust in my eyes: I said, This is the desert
The drop of water spread: I said, This is the boundless sea

I saw flames leaping in the wind: I cried out, Spring is coming
They danced themselves to ashes, and I said, Autumn has come

The drop of blood became a clot: I knew it as my heart
A wave of bitter water rolled: I said, This my speech

In exile I felt lost: I said, This country is my country
I felt the snare's noose tightening: I said, This is my nest

She sat in pride close to my side: I said, She is my heart
Capriciously she rose and left: I said, There goes my soul

The general tenor of the ghazal is, 'I accept every experience and turn it into something positive.'1
All that I lost in ecstasy accrued to me as gain
All that remained of consciousness I designated loss

For years she held aloof from me: I said, She favours me
She came close for a while. I said, She has her doubts of me

She was intent on slaying me. Alas for me, that I
Declared she was indifferent, said that she was unkind

To make her feel obliged to me for all I did for her
She was my host, and yet I told myself, She is my guest

I journeyed on beyond each stage I set myself to cover
I saw the Kaba as the tracks of those who had gone on

My hopes told me, She likes to try my powers of endurance
You severed all our ties: I said, She is just testing me
Joy in the raging flood and, like the bridge's image, dance
Know where you are, but move beyond the bounds of self, and dance

She will not keep her word - treasure the moment that she gives it
When lovely women pledge their word, rejoice in it, and dance

Delight in moving on. Why think about your destination?
Don't measure progress; hear the summons of the bell, and dance

Once we were young and flourished like the flowers in the gardens
Come, flames; now we are straw and thorns, devour us, and dance

The owl's cry too is music; hear, and dance in ecstasy
Hope too to see the movement of the huma's wings, and dance

---

a. The bridge stands firm, and so must you. But it rejoices in the force of the river in flood and in its power to change all around it, and can see itself apart from itself, with its joy expressed in its reflection that dances on the surface of the swirling water. You too must develop the same power.

b. ‘The bell’ - the bell that signals that the caravan is about to move off. As in many other verses, Ghalib is saying that one should know that there is no final goal to man's spiritual and intellectual journey and that the man who would develop his potentialities to the full must always journey on.

c. Our usefulness does not end when our youthful vigour ends. Even at the last there is something we can do to help forward the beauty and the movement of life.

d. The owl, which haunts places, is a bird of ill omen and here stands for all the distressing experiences of life, while the legendary huma typifies the highest good fortune that a man can hope to attain. Ghalib says, ‘Welcome and rejoice in all human experience.'
In love you have not yet attained the limit of delight
Be like the whirlwind's dust and rise into the air, and dance

Abandon all the outworn norms so dear to our good friends
When they are celebrating, wail; when they are mourning, dance

The good are 'angry'. Hypocrites 'love' you. Don't be like them
Don't hide within yourself. Come out into the open. Dance!

Don't look for grief in burning or for joy in flowering
In the hot wind's embrace, and with the breeze of morning, dance!

Ghalib, rejoice that there is one in whose bonds you are tied
Flourish; welcome distress; and in the ties of bondage, dance

---

a Only if you reduce yourself to dust, that is, humble yourself completely before the object of your love, can you hope to experience love's full ecstasy.

b,c Don't live by convention. Establish your own values and live by them, and never mind if the conventional are shocked. The self-consciously good express an anger, and the hypocrites, love, which they don't really feel. Don't be like them; show what you really are.
Pay frenzy all your stock of wisdom, for that generous one
For every gain you pay it pays you loss a thousand fold
Hail to the hand that counts the prayer-beads! For the day
may come
When love gives it instead a grasp that closes on the cup
Now cruelty rewards your every act of love for her
See, Ghalib, what she gives in recompense for all you give
To put my lips to yours and die - this is my whole desire
To tell one's love, the telling must possess a certain charm
Unless I pass the Kaba, I see nothing. I set out
To journey from the temple looking backwards all the way

a. Wisdom, gain, loss - i.e. what the conventional world regards as such, but what the lover knows in fact to be the exact opposite of all these things.

b. Value commitment. The man who can commit himself, even though it be to false ideals, may one day learn to transfer the commitment to true ones.

c. The charm of novelty. No one has yet managed to attain to this way of telling his love.

d. Neither the temple nor the Kaba is the end of man's spiritual search. Both are stages on an unending journey. But it is a journey on which you must never lose sight of what you have learned at every stage of it.
To trust your promise was mistaken. Yes, that was mistaken
To hope for kisses from your lips was wrong. Yes, that was wrong

All know you have a tongue that does not speak. But have you also a
A heart that does not know? No, that is wrong. Yes, that is wrong

I live my life, but can’t get wine. So where’s the joy?
You can, but you don’t drink. It’s spring. But where’s the joy?

Kausar is fine, and so’s the wine that flows in it
The holy wine is there. I’m here. So where’s the joy?

The garden blooms; there’s no one there to steal your heart
The swirling dust heralds no rider. Where’s the joy?

Lost in desire to see her coming through the door -
Promises? Nothing! Waiting? Nothing! Where’s the joy?

a. You know in your heart that I love you. That is enough for me. Whether you say that you
know it, and whether you respond to my love, does not matter.

b. Life without a beloved is pointless. She (or God, or it) alone gives you the capacity to enjoy
life’s beauty to the full. And she (He, it) alone, like a brigand who plunders all your wealth,
destroyed your attachment to material things, and provides the joy of life. Rising dust in the
desert could have signalled the approach of a fast-riding brigand.

c. The desire to see her is an all-sufficient source of joy.
Why go with care about a task I can't perform?
I can; she doesn't want me to. So where's the joy?

The tree is high, and I can't find a stone to throw
Until the fruit falls at my feet, then where's the joy?

Fettered to wife and children, You are killing me
I didn't ask to have them; and so where's the joy?

You have the power to set me up in Rizván's place
I'm lost in dreams; I don't want work. So where's the joy?

How can dead hearts feel a delight in living, breathing life?
How can plucked flowers feel the joy the breeze of morning brings?

Unless your eyes see turmoil what use are your eyes to you?
Unless the dagger pierce your heart, what joy can your heart feel?

a. If she doesn't want me to do it, I can't do it.

b. A stone to throw at the fruit and bring it down.

c. For Ghalib's attitude to his wife and children, see Ghalib: Life and Letters. He fulfilled all his obligations to them, but often felt that they were an encumbrance he could well have done without.

d. The fact that Rizván is the guardian of Paradise doesn't alter the fact that he is a servant, with a task to perform. I don't want to be anyone's servant.
What joy! Since I reject them both, Brahmans and shaikhs are now at one
Belief and unbelief unite - and this has brought me peace of mind

Alas! How happy I would be in winter, sitting by the fire
With wine and meat and witty friends gathered together in one place

Morning has come with all its charm.
Ghalib, awake from heedless sleep!
The good have gathered in the mosque,
the revellers among the flowers

They made me swift of gait and put a sharp pick in my hands
My power makes me take pity on the mountain and the waste

Colour and fragrance graced you once, and I had all I needed
Your colour and your fragrance faded; all I had is gone

I need the power of wings, and in these heavy bonds I die
Fast in the snare of suffering, my power and strength are gone

---
a  Since I reject the formalised religion of both mosque and temple, shaikh and Brahmans are
united in their hostility to me. That is good! The 'religious' they represent are equally bad,
just as the Muslim who truly loves his God and the 'infidel' who truly loves his are equally
good.

b  Whatever role you have decided upon in life, seize yourself, and perform it.
Would that the sky had tired of turning, Ghalib; all my days
Are past and gone to no effect. Why are they passed and gone?

I turned my gaze upon the world; now I am helpless, struggling
Grief that I have so little time; longing to gaze on everything

You enter into beauty's hall. Make up your mind; good sense is gone
Here is the saki pouring wine; there is the minstrel's lifting song

Here are my eyes, there is my heart - my misery finds no relief
This holds a hidden suffering: those shed the tears of open grief

She lost her way, and found herself at my cell
Love's guidance had the power to deceive her

Take and destroy false lovers' debased coinage
Now you are governor of love's dominion

---

a My love drew her involuntarily to my house, which is like a hermit's cell, without her even
being aware that this was happening.

b Now you know what true love is, act accordingly.
Do not be proud; accept the truths I teach.
I have loved to the end: you are beginning.

He is a man who goes to meet the onrush of desires, and dies
Who emulates the thirsty man who wades into the stream and dies

I die with joy when I behold the glory of the traveller
Who journeys on and on in hope to find the anqa’s nest, and dies

No man is he whom cool restoratives bring back to consciousness
He is a man who goes into the scorching desert wind, and dies

Grief brings a special happiness, and he who seeks it eagerly
Experiences a joy, unseen by those who watch him as he dies

I speak to tell you something worth your hearing
What of it if my verses are but few?

---

a. Like Majmūn and Farhad, respectively. But my regard for the things that I shall injure if I act as they did holds me back.
I have no worldly wealth, nor shall I win reward in heaven
I lack both Namrud's power and Ibrahim's fortitude

For other men the saki's hand pours pure wine generously
While we stand by the stream and are denied a draught of water

With you, I feel the joy that Moses felt upon Mount Tur
Alone, I drown, like Pharoah's army entering the Nile

Your own perfection can alone encompass Your perfection
Your own existence is the only proof that You exist

Why is it You bring nothing to the parched lips of the Muslims
When you bestow abundant wine on those who worship fire?

Why have you made despondent Ghalib poet in a land
Where none knows what distinguishes Naziri from Qatil?
I thought, 'I shall expand with joy beyond the grasp of her embrace'
She simply took me in her arms and held me fast in her embrace

I joy in her anxiety, the pointless fluttering of her heart
Her creased brow as she plays with me, hugging herself in my embrace

The scanty clothes that cover her, more scanty still as,
moist with shame
Sweat soaks them to transparency and she lies bare in my embrace

Discretion washed away by wine, no more aware of hers and mine
Holding her face against my breast she hides herself in my embrace

Now sleeping, happy, at my side, no sound, no word
comes from her lips
Now with her head laid on my arm, rubbing her chin in my embrace

She came unbidden with the dawn, the tie-strings
of her robe undone
Bearing her letter from the king unopened still in her embrace

a. The letter would have been a summons to her to come.
Among the flowers, flushed with wine, she roams around on every side
Her very shadow seems to hold thousands of flowers in its embrace

Yes, Ghalib, locked within your home, those are your fears, these are your joys
The king's spies lie in wait for you, the king's beloved in your embrace

I start to speak a verse complaining of your cruel nature
My words stay in my mouth, my theme vanishes from my heart

I went to banish staledness from the scene that lies before us
And bring new modes into the scents and colours of the world

I strike into men's hearts the rage of madness to inspire them
I fill the head of reason with the spells of sorcery

I teach our ghazis what it means to fight the evil in them
Their sharp sword sheds its mettle as it trembles in their hand

a 'ghazi' - one who wagers holy war.
The really heroic holy war is war against all that is evil in oneself. The difficulties of war against infidels are nothing by comparison.
My weakness earned for me a special closeness to the Kaba
You spread your prayer mat there, and I have laid my bed
down there

I make a road to take me from the temple into heaven
I draw wine from the cask and pour it into Kausar's stream

So that the wine gains strength to lacerate the breast more fiercely
I melt the flask and pour the molten glass into the cup

I copied out the dictionaries of yearning
There was not one that told me what 'hope' means

The past is all regrets, the future yearnings
'Would that...' are words I wrote a hundred times

I fed each thorn my blood, and wrote a manual
To tell men how to cultivate the waste

---

a  Weakness resulting from unceasing, strenuous effort to seek the truth.
b  My wine will enhance the quality of the wine of paradise.
On lips that call on Ali's name we've made the wine to flow
Practising true religion, tasting irrereligious joys

We got our wine on credit, wasted all our wealth on dice
We did improper things - and did not do them properly

We checked our lament on our lips, hid in our hearts love's wounds
We wealthy misers kept our gold safe in our treasury

We showed the world a carefree face. How could we then lament?
Such breath as we possessed we used to sing a melody

Ghalib, since good and bad alike proceed from fate alone
I put my heart into my task, regardless of all else

I saw the wine lacked power to bring awareness of life’s secrets
I rose, and crushed my heart, and went and poured it in the cup
Where are the drinkers? Who will taste the joys I freely offer? I am impatient. Though my wine grows old I sell it cheap

My pious friend, do not despise the bunch of grapes I give you Do you not know it means that I have lost a cup of wine?

The saki's eyes poured wine for every drinker in one cup I made it serve the needs of faith and unbelief alike

I take a kiss, and then say I am sorry. Thus I make Some innovations in the rules of social intercourse

The mosque is ruined; so I bring its stones into the city And build myself a house there in the unbeliever's lane

I fashion my own faith and make my faith my own reward I carve the stone to make an idol, and then worship it

a.b. 'wine' - my message, my poetry.

c A mosque that is empty is no use. Better to destroy it and the lifeless kind of religion that it represents and use the materials to serve the needs of men who are truly alive. 'Unbelievers' translates the original Persian Jurujen, which usually means fire-worshippers. These are associated with wine-drinking.

d I do not accept a faith prescribed for me by others. I work out my own faith and am true to it, even if others censure it with unbelief.
Come change the laws that have governed the turning of the skies
Seize heavy fate like a goblet, and pass it round as we please

Store up the hoard of the gain that the heart and eye can amass
Play host to soul and to body; drive out their fear of loss

The world goes by; let us leave it. Come in, and shut the door
And post a guard in the lane so that none may come any more

The governor sends to reprove us? Let us not feel any fear
The king sends gifts? We shall tell him, 'They are not wanted here'

Let's speak with none - not if even Kalim himself should come
Make none our guest - not if even Khalil himself would be one

Let's scatter roses and sprinkle rose-water on the ground
Bring wine to pour in abundance and let the cup go round
No guests, no minstrel, no saki - let's tell them all to be gone
Let there be only a handmaid who knows what is to be done

Now pleasing you with the sweetness of conversation's grace
Now savouring with our tongues all the passion of our kiss

Put shame aside; let us grapple in such a bold embrace
The stars above in the heavens will try to hide their face

Our hearts afire, we will hold up the coming of the dawn
And banish out of existence hot day before it is born

Create in all the illusion night has not yielded to day
Turn back the sheep and the shepherd before they're on their way

With words of war we will challenge the flower-gatherers' bands
'You come to plunder the garden? Go back with empty hands!'
With words of peace as the dawn comes we'll lull the wakening birds
Luring them back to their nests with the sweetness of our words

Is Ghalib, then, destined never to look into your eyes?
Come, change the laws that have governed the turning of the skies

I shun the company of men in striving to perfect myself
My soul a melody that seeks a dwelling in a lute

O you who sing the praises of the poets of Iran
Why do you rate our debt so high to them who gave so little?

In India are men the fragrance of whose poetry
Is borne away and spread abroad like musk upon the breeze

Grief-stricken Ghalib does not rank with them; and yet he too
Sits there with them and shares their friendship and their poetry

a,b,c These verses form a single whole.
He wins the crown of happiness in this world and the world to come
Who dies out in the desert, having lived in palaces

We have become presumptuous; where is your pride of beauty?
We have abandoned loyalty; where is your punishment?

Why this pretence of clemency, for God's sake? You aren't God
Where is that grave displeasure and that former wrathfulness?

Sometimes we broke our ties, sometimes drew closer to each other
But now I feel no sorrow, and you feel no difference-

I'll drink pure wine, but where will be the dread of being caught?
And where in paradise the spice of fear it will not last?

a. He, i.e. the man who can enjoy to the full all the luxuries life can give him, and be equally happy and serene if he loses all and passes his last days in the wilderness.

b,c,d regret the cooling of love.
Divine grace does not falter; give up your useless strivings
You could not be an infidel? Then settle for Islam.

To rove around is pointless; you cannot be an ocean
A stream? Go to the garden. A flood? Make for the wastes

It's good to live in comfort; good too is light abounding
Lodge then, within the Kaba, and be the temple's guest

First grant to me a harvest, and then come and destroy it
Be lightning on my harvest and rain upon my fields

I quarrel with my friends - I am so innocent!
About a friend whose friendship I have never tried

Just see my shame! They counted my good deeds and found
None but a single fast I kept - and broke with wine

a It is God who decrees which you shall be, but to be an 'infidel', who worships beauty and love, would have been better than to be an orthodox Muslim.
b Both conventional religion and unorthodoxy have something to offer you.
c At present I receive only your anger. At least give me some kindness first!
Ghalib, I do not claim a place among the city's nobles
I am among those humble ones who dwell in Delhi's dust

Into my breast, into my heart, you made your way and still
The glance that stirs men's love for you stirred mine and stirs it still

Your wrath, your kindness - I no more can tell one from the other
The charm that kills men's intellect killed mine and kills it still

Still drunk with last night's wine, my love - and I would die for you
The sight of your unsteady gait charmed me and charms me still

You have not turned to God, and that sarcastic wit of yours
That used to mock at Judgement Day is mocking at it still

Your sweetness, still unuttered, can pervade my heart and soul
O words, steeped in the sweetness of whose lips are you held fast?

---

The picture is of lips sealed by their own sweetness so that they cannot part to utter any words.
The distance from my heart to yours is not a little one
You are excused if you are slow to understand my words

The pious, and their mosques and pulpits - who needs them today?
Today is Id, and dawn has come. Pure wine, where have you gone?

The fragrance of the rose, the dew - these do not suit my cell
Cold wind, where do you rage? destroying flood,
where have you gone?

I stand on doomsday's plain, and God is judge, and all is quiet
O my complaint against my callous friends, where have you gone?

He who would look for shame in you or hope for kindness from you
Seeks piety in taverns, thinks the British will be just

---

a  Forget about past injustices.
He who has eyes to see counts up the beauties spread before him
And sees all Azar's idols dancing, locked within the rock

That she may have no ground either for kindness or for anger
She says my thanks fall short, and my complaints are trivial

Why should we envy angels? What for? They cannot come to You
Foolish, they want to come to You, but fly around in vain

Alas that I should writhe in blood, when it is said of You that You
Count tears as yet unshed and hear lament as yet unuttered

If Kausar flows my way, it will dry up before it reaches me
If Tuba bends for me, its boughs be dry, and stripped of fruit

There you would see a melting heart, melting in seas of fire
Ghalib, if when I speak a verse, you could look deep within me
EXPLANATORY INDEX

This index is intended to serve more than one purpose.

First, it is designed to obviate the need for constant repetition in the notes of explanations of words, concepts and literary allusions which occur repeatedly in the poems.

Secondly, it gives key words to help you find a verse which you do not remember in full.

And thirdly, since readers will, I hope, include those who already have some acquaintance with the Persian originals, I include, though more sparingly, key words in the original text which may serve the same purpose for them.

Quotations from the Quran are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation.

In explaining literary allusions, I have not explained everything which might have needed explaining in a work of wider range, but only those relevant to the couplets in this selection.

Finding key words for important recurring concepts is not easy and if you cannot find an entry under the word you would have used, look for others of similar meaning. I have not aimed to include every possible key word or every possible reference but I hope that you will find here, if not all, at any rate most of what you are looking for.

Numbers refer to pages.

ah e hayat, see Khayr
Abraham, see Ibrahim
abstinence and Ramzan, 64
acceptance of fate, 36, 94, 132
Adam-the biblical Adam, the first prophet of Islam and often the symbol of humankind, (q.v.), 20, 72
after-life, see paradise
Alexander the Great, see Sikandar
‘Ali - the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and husband of his daughter, Fatimah. After the Prophet’s death, a caliph (Khalifa - literally, ‘deputy’) was needed to guide the Muslim community in both spiritual and temporal affairs. The Shia sect of Muslims considered that Ali should have been chosen but he was passed over and three successive caliphs ruled before he became caliph. During his life, he fought two wars against his rivals and was finally murdered by a member of a rival sect. 870, 1222
aloes, 70
anchor, 54
angels are not to be envied, 140
ampu - a mythical bird which is believed to exist, although no one has seen it, 112
... asleep, 54, 56
atom and sun, 46
autumn and spring, 52, 64
autumn eternal, 52
autumn leaf, 80
Azar - a famous sculptor and idolater, the father of Ibrahim (q.v.). His son, who was a prophet of Islam, tried without success to convert him to the true faith. Azar is often praised for the beauty of the idols he made. 66, 78, 140
azizan, 78
Babylon, 62
Baghdad, 60
bahisht, see paradise
banners of Iran’s Kings, 68
basil, sweet basil, 82
Bastam, 60
Bayazid, 60
beauty, longing for, 14
beggars, 16, 54, 80
be-gush, 44
bell (of the caravan), 98
beloved, the her beauty and the beauty of spring, 26
her beauty and the river, 42
and God, 136
in love, 84 (whole ghazal)
comes to Ghalib’s house. 126-130 (whole ghazal)
bigardem, 126-130
birugs, 98, 100
beyaz, 31
bira, baya, 20

bird/smear/cage - the songbird, and more especially the nightingale, is the symbol of the lover. The cage is the symbol of the constraints within which the true lover (in all senses of the word) must live, whether in bondage to his beloved or constrained by the hostility of society at large. The captive bird feels different things at different times, sometimes accepting his lot, sometimes pining for his former freedom. 36, 58, 94, 108

blister - a symbol of the suffering of the lover as he treads the desert paths of love, 40

blood - the grief of love crushes the heart to blood and this blood comes out in the tears of blood the lover sheds. 'Blood' commonly means this blood and only this: blood is worth anything, blood, to fertilise growth, 120

blunt, let me be, 26

Brahman, Brahm - a member of the highest Hindu caste, the priestly caste, often censured as the Hindu counterpart of the Muslim shahik, the pillar of religious orthodoxy. 48, 66, 78, 108

bridge, 98

brigand, 104

British, their injustice, 138

cage, see bird

"can cast a spell on me," 18 (whole ghazal)
candle as a metaphor for wine, 82
captain (of a ship), 54

causative, see, constant...

che hat? 104, 106

clemency, beloved's pretence of, 132
cloak and Quran sold for wine, 58

coinage, debased, 110
come 20

commitment, 102

companion, King's, 22

company shunned, 130

compasses, seven, 34

conch, 68

costant movement, change, activity, journeying, seeking, effort, struggle - all are desirable, whether these bring joy or grief, 24, 46, 50, 52, 96, 98, 102

courage, 112, 122

courtships, 34

creation - a new creation, 52

cruelty of the age, and the beloved's cruelty, 16, 76

cultivate the waste, 120
dance! 98, 100

Dajk - the river Tigris, 38
dar bagh, 117, 119
dawn, 58, 128
dear friends, 78
dernapped coinage, 110

Delhi, 136
delicate, 40
desire

desire strong enough to bring wine into the cup, 64
despair

despair of God leading to renewed hope, 76
dictionaries, 120

disputations, 38

dragon, 56

dreams, 62

drop of water, and the ocean; grain of sand and the desert - the drop of water is the ocean, and the grain of sand the desert in microcosm. Love gives the lover the power to see the whole within its smallest part and to see the potentiality of the smallest part to become the whole. Often the drop/the grain of sand is the symbol of the lover, whose highest aspiration is to merge in his human or divine beloved as the drop is lost in the ocean or the grain of sand in the desert, 24, 52

embrace, in my, 116, 118

experience

experience imaginative experience of what has not yet happened, 18, 54, 140

Fourak, 38

fantasy - an essential element of life, 18, 70

fiqit, 76

firing, see forang

fire, 108
everyone goes to his fate alone. 38 no one asks what fate has not given, 38

inspires to effort, 122

man contributes to his fate, 10

let us change it, 126, 130

fathers, cannot expect sons to follow in their path, 78

forang, see forang

fire-temple, fire-worshippers, 44, 68, 114, 124

flowers

in the assembly and in the garden, 48

flower-gatherers, 12, 128

flower-seller, 36

fool, 70

forebears, reverence for, 34

fowler - a metaphor for the beloved or for the dangers that beset the lover

see bird/smear/cage

free will & fate, 58

friendship, 134

furnace, 52
garden’s guardian, 36

gardening, 12

Ghalib
his religious ‘manifesto’, 88-92 (whole ghazal)
‘not a Muslim, not an infidel’, 50
a man of many skills, 72
fashions his own idol, 124
g a ghazi, 118
cannot find one worthy of his love, 36
seeks a threshold to bow down upon, 36
shams company in striving for self-perfection, 130
shams rich and poor alike, 28
would retire to worship God, 28
refuses to submit to obligation, 22
wants to be no one’s servant, 106
inherits Iran’s pre-Islamic traditions, 68, 70
became a poet at poetry’s own request, 14
his poetry is inspired (ilham), 60
he cannot express all that is in him, 48
his poetry is a ‘selection’, 46
his verses are few but meaningful, 112
he is an Indian poet, 60
he is King of the realm of meaning, 16
poetry comes from a heart ‘melting’ in fire, 140
he should not be overshadowed by the poets of the past, 62, 130
poets of the past should be revered, 34
his command of Persian, 68, 70
his kinship with good contemporary poets of Persian in India, 130
his poetry is for himself, 26
his poetry is not appreciated, 114

Ghalib’s wife and children, 106
gham-see grief
gharib e shahir, 76
ghaz, 118

glass, as a metaphor of sensitivity, 12

God criticized/complained of: rebuked, 76, 114, 140
is inscrutable and self-sufficient, 8, 10
must be loved unconditionally, 8, 10

governor (shahana), 38, 110, 126

grain of sand and the desert, see drop of water, 124

grapes and wine, 124
grief - commonly means the grief and suffering which love inevitably brings, or love itself, or sympathy with all who suffer. It is therefore something to be sought and valued.

guest, inopportune arrival, 46
guest and host in the realm of love, 96

Gulistan, 74
see also Sadi

happiness, create it from your own resources, drawing on all your experience, 66, 94 (whole ghazal)

haram o halal, 56
henna - women apply henna to their hands and feet on occasions of rejoicing, the lover’s blood serves as henna, 84

high rank, does not appreciate learning, 38

hope, what does it mean?, 120

host and guest in the realm of love, 96

human - a mythical bird of which it is said that any man on whom its shadow falls will become a king, 12, 42, 98

human kind, the object of creation, 34

human kind and God, man must love God unfailingly, 8, 10

Husain - the younger son of Ali (q.v.). After the death of Husain’s elder brother Hasan, who had succeeded Ali as caliph, Yazid claimed the caliphate. Husain rejected his right to rule and gathering his kinsmen and supporters, set out to do battle with him. When he and his seventy-two companions reached Karbala on the banks of the Euphrates, they were surrounded by Yazid’s forces and cut off from the water but fought on until only a few women and children were left alive. 76

I, and myself reflected…; 14

Ibrahim, the biblical Abraham - in Islamic belief, the son of Azar (q.v.). See also Hamad. He is called ibad (‘friend of God’), a title which God himself bestowed on him. He is famous for his hospitality, 70, 126

Id, 118

Ibn, 124

Idris - identified by some with the biblical Enoch. Legend says that he did not die but was raised to heaven, 12

ilham and vah, 60

...in my embrace’, 116, 118 (whole ghazal)

Indian poets of Persian, 130
infidel, 16

injustice, its role in history, 86

Iran
its pre-Islamic traditions, 44

good poets of Iran and of India, 130

irreligious joys, 122

Isa, 12

Ismael - the son of Ishmael (q.v.). To put Ismael’s devotion to the test, God commanded him to sacrifice Ismael. Both father and son gladly prepared themselves to obey but at the last moment God substituted a ram for sacrifice, 70

Ish, 39

Jam - another name for Jamshed (q.v.)

Jamat
a legendary king of ancient Iran. He is said to have invented wine and the wine cup. He had (and is said by some to have invented) a wonderful wine cup in the depths of which he could see everything that went on in the world, 24, 62

Jamshed, see paradise

Jesus, see Isa

journeying, see constant...

Joseph, see Yusuf

joy, ‘where’s the joy? 104, 106

Judgement Day - the day when, at the sound of the trumpet, all will assemble before God on a great plain to be judged. Its turmoil and the awe which it inspires makes it a metaphor for any awesome or terrible occasion a day on which one forgives, 138

the beloved on indigation Day, 40, 54, 136
Junaid, 60

Kaba - the holy place in Mecca toward which Muslims turn when they pray. Muslim tradition says it was built by Ibrahim (q.v.) and his son, Ismail (q.v.). Ghalib has numerous verses about it and some of these express dissatisfaction about it and what it represents. In any case, one needs to go beyond the Kaba which, to those who know this, simply indicates the way forward. 56,60,96,102,120,134

Kalam, see Tur, Musa

Karbalā, see Hussain, 8

katan, 26

Kauzor - a stream in paradise in which 'the wine of purity' will flow, 50,104,120,140.

khşa, 72

Khalil, see Ibrahim

Khizr, Khizār - an ancient prophet of Islam who never dies because he found and drank the water of life (ab e hayat). He lives away from people and appears to travellers who have lost their way and guides them onto the right path. 8,54 Ghalib often belligerently argues that he has not used his endless life to any good effect. 44

In any case, he had been deprived of the joy of dying (for love) and is therefore not to be envied 12

khşa, see khşa

kings, and justice, 86 their company to be avoided, 56 king's spies, 118 their gifts to be rejected, 126

king's beloved in Ghalib's embrace, 118

king's companion, 22

kings of Iran, 68

kiss, kisses, 80,102,124,128

Latfasp - a legendary king of Iran. 44

learning, unappreciated by men of high rank, 38

lies told in a worthy cause, 74

life is too short, 110

life without a beloved is pointless, 104

lightning, its brilliance, speed and destructive power are all stressed. 28,50,84,134

lips, sealed by sweetness, 136

lover

is exempt from general rules, 56

wants physical union, 26

macrocossm and microcosm, see drop of water...

maqṣa, 8

Maghm (the mad one) - the name given to Qais, the great lover in Arab legend. He fell in love with Lalai when both were children. When their love became known steps were taken to prevent them meeting and Qais went mad (hence his nickname) and went roaming about the desert wastes. Sometimes Lalai passed that way riding in a litter on a she-camel and Maghm would run after it. Lalai returned his love but her father married her to another man. She died of grief and when Maghm heard the news he rushed to her tomb and died there, 112

mannad, 120

mankind, see humankind

martyrs, 86

meeting and parting, 20

melody, 38

that seeks a dwelling in a cave, 130

milestones, seven, 10

mirages, 22

mirror - a word with many connotations. Itself beautiful, it reflects also the beauty of the beloved who gazes into it, lost in the contemplation of her own beauty. The beauties of nature are the mirror of God's beauty. Mirrors are made of burnished steel. Its 'verdure' is the green coating that develops when it is not kept burnished, 30,36 invented by Balkandar, 62

misers, 122

moonlight and katan, 26

Moses, see Tur, Musa

mowd, see also candle, 50,74

mountain, see rock...

Musa, see Tur music, 70,82

'My lord' see khşa

naïve, see simplicity

nunmānd, see ṣa'i, 42

nakhsda, 54

Namrud - a legendary king of ancient Iraq who claimed that he was God. Ibrahim (q.v.) rejected his claim and Namrud had him thrown into a great fire, whereupon the fire became a bed of flowers. 70,114

Naziir - a Persian poet, much admired by Ghalib 114

nazkīr, 41

net see bird

new creation, 52

nightingale, the symbol of the lover and of the lover-poet, whose verse is as beautiful as the nightingale's song. In both cases the beloved is unmeoved. 74 see also bird, snare, cage

Nile - in Muslim tradition, it was the Nile in which Pharaoh's armies were drowned when they were pursuing the children of Israel. 114

ocean, see also drop of water

opposites - the existence of contrasting opposites essential in life, 30

owl, 98

palaces, 132

paradise - in paradise (called in Persian bahish, 'riding, jannat, kholud) virtuous Muslims will reap heavenly reward for their good deeds on earth. Its gatekeeper, Rizwan (q.v.), tends it eight gardens. There will be milk and honey in abundance The 'wine of purity' will flow in the stream of Kauzor and the Tuba tree will offer its delicious fruits...
Beautiful women (houris) will gratify every desire. Ghalib is sceptical about its supposed joys and its inadequacy either to match the joys of this life or compensate for its sufferings. Only the prospect of abundant wine evokes his enthusiasm, 44. The prospect of continuing, unalloyed pleasures is not attractive one as the 'spice of fear' will be lacking, 132. The houris come in for much critical comment. The pious do not deserve paradise. 86

parting and meeting, 20

Parvez, a legendary King of Iran, 44

Persian, Ghalib's command of, 68

Pharaoh, 114

Pilgrimage- the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the 'five pillars' of Islam. Every Muslim who can afford it must make the journey at least once during his lifetime. The pilgrim wears special robes of pilgrimage (q.v) called ahram

piety, pious, 16,86,138

pity, 112

poor

shun their company, 28

prayer-beads, 102

preacher, 50,70

Predecessors, see forebears

Qutui - an Indian poet and scholar of Persian of whom Ghalib held a very poor opinion, 114

qura, see drop

Quran, sold for 58

Ramadan, see Ramzan

Ramzan, see Ramzan

religion....and irreligious joys, 122

religious disputation condemned, 38

religion's miracles, 22

rich, their company to be shunned, 28

ripples, 22

river, and the beloved's beauty, 42

Rizvan - the gatekeeper of paradise and keeper of its gardens, 106

robes of pilgrimage may be pawned for wine, 60

rock, mountain, flint, stone - rock is hard and strong but is also a source of beauty. Sparks leap from it when it is struck. Beautiful sculptures are 'locked within it'. It is the raw material of delicate glass, glass which will hold wine. 40

Ghalib has the qualities of both rock and glass, 12

roses surge within the branch, 54

Sadi - great thirteenth century Persian poet and prose writer, especially famous for his Gulistan, a collection of short humorous and moral anecdotes, 74

saki - the beautiful youth who pours the wine for you. The symbol of your beloved (human or divine), of love, of beauty and of any ideal that inspires you. Ghalib sometimes criticises him for not playing the role he should. 28,64,110,124

salamander - a mythical animal that lives in fire, 24,50

Salabil, a fountain in paradise, 34

sand, see drop of water...

saki, see saki

scribe of fate, 38

search, seeking, see constant...

self oblivion, 24

seven heavens or seven skies - the revolution of the seven heavens determines your fate (q.v.). The seven 'millenniums' (10) and seven 'compasses' (134) are metaphors for these.

shahna, see (governor), 39,110,127

shepherd, 128

slave, 10

Sikandar - Alexander the Great 8,62

simplicity of the lover, 60

simple-minded, 60

Sinai, Mount - Tur, see Tur, Musa

snare see bird

sons cannot follow their father's path, 78

sorceries of Babylon, 62

spell 18 (whole ghazal

spice of fear, 132

spring, 34

spring and autumn, 52,64

standards of conduct, 10

stormy waves, 54

stranger with something to say, 76

sweet, 116

takalluf, bararaf, 26

tapestry of life, 70

tartary, 60

task

I put my heart into my back' 122

temple, the home of idols, (i.e. beloved) and of beauty, 102,120,134

theologian, 76

threshold to how down upon' 96

touchstone, 38

Tuba - a tree in paradise, the branches of which extend so widely that there will be one in the house of every dweller there. Its branches are laden with all manner of fruits and perfumes, and the branches bearing them will lower them of their own accord to be plucked, 44,50,140

Tur, Musa - Musa is the Moses of the Bible and one of the major prophets of Islam. The commonest references to him speak of his speaking with God near the mountain of Tur. It was here that Musa asked God to show Himself to him. In the Quran (vii, 143), God says: 'When Moses (Musa) came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him he said: "Oh my Lord, show (Thyself) to me that I may look upon
Thee". God said: "By no means canst thou see Me (directly); but look upon the mount. If it abide in its place then shalt thou see Me." When his Lord manifested His glory on the mount He made it as dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon... "The mount" was the mountain of Tur. Even the great mountain was reduced to dust by God's radiance.

Musa is also called Kalim - literally 'one who speaks with another' - because he spoke with God. At one stage in his life, he served eight years as a goatherder to the prophet Ishaq and Ishaq gave him his daughter in marriage in return. 76 is a reference to this. When he led the children of Israel out of Egypt towards the promised land, the waters parted before them to enable them to reach the other side in safety and then closed over Pharaoh and his army and drowned them. In Muslim tradition these were the waters of the Nile.

turmoil (hanging), 44 (fitna), 106

vahi and ilham, 60

waves, 54

West, the, source of fine wine, 60 (5)

'where's the joy?', 104,106

willow, 48

wine - Ghalib made no secret of the fact that he broke the Islamic prohibition on wine and many of his verses celebrate the pleasures of drinking. Wine also regularly symbolises the message of true religion, the inspiration of love and of worthwhile action in life, but there is no reason to prefer the symbolic meaning to the literal one except where the sense clearly demands it. It would be pointless to list every reference.