A DANCE OF SPARKS

Imagery of Fire in Ghalib's Poetry

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IN MEMORIAM

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FOREWORD

The four articles contained in this book—with the exception of the Introduction—were developed out of talks given in connection with the Ghalib Centenary in 1969 in Karachi and Delhi. The last article, Poetry and Calligraphy, was published without footnotes, and in a slightly different form, in Pakistan Quarterly XXII.

The articles constitute an attempt to offer the reader some of the theoretical background necessary for a proper evaluation of Ghalib’s poetry.

Cambridge, Mass.
May 1974

Annemarie Schimmel
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES, ABBREVIATIONS

Ghâlib's works are quoted in the Lahore edition, 17 volumes, 1969.
U = Divân-i Ghâlib, Urdu, ed. Ḥaṁīd ʻAḥmad Khân (quoted in pages).
IV = Ghausiyyât-i Fârsî, ed. Ṣayyid Wâzir ul-Ḥasan ʻAbidî (quoted according to numbers: IV Nr. 219).
Q = Qaṣâ'id u maṭla'muwiḥâ-yi Fârsî (Vol. V), ed. Ghiyâm Rasûl Mehr, both qasîdas (Q) and maṭla'muwiḥâs (M) quoted with Roman numbers Q III, M VI.
Qît = Qitâb, Rubâ'i-yât, tarjîb-band, tarjîh-band, muṭkhammas (Vol. VI) ed. Ghiyâm Rasûl Mehr, quoted Qît. Nr. 19; R = Rubâ'i Nr. . .
S = Sabādehâ (Vol. VII), ed. Ṣayyid Wâzir ul-Ḥasan ʻAbidî (quoted according to pages).

The XVth volume of these publications (maṭbû'â-yi Majlis-i yâdûr-i Ghausîb) contains an introduction into Ghâlib's work:

Main studies in Western languages:
Dr. ʻĀrifshâh C. Ṣayyid Gâhâni, Ghâlib. His Life and Persian Poetry, Karachi 1962.


Every History of Urdu Literature, from Garcia de Tassy through Saksena and Bailey to Muḥammad Ṣâdiq contains a more or less detailed account of Ghâlib's life and work.

Translations of his verses into English have been attempted by a considerable number of Indian, Pakistani, and Western writers; none of them is, however, fully satisfactory owing to the immense difficulties of Ghâlib's style. The most successful attempt seems to me: Ghâlib. Selected Poems, translated with an introduction by ʻAḥmad Ali, I.S. M.E.O., Rome 1969.

A German translation by the present writer:

Beginning with Hâlî's Yâdûr-i Ghâlib, the literature about our poet produced during the last 75 years is extremely vast. Many scholars of India and Pakistan have devoted their lives to the study of his life and work; we may mention among them Mâlik Râm, S. M. Ikrâm, Ghiyâm Rasûl Mehr, Imitâz ʻAlî Ṣarshâ, Khâlîfa ʻAbdul Ḥakîm, Yûsuf Ḥusâin Khân, Ḥâlî ʻAḥmad Suropri, Ebader Brelwi,
Áfhaz Husain, to single out only the most prolific writers in this field. Abbreviations of oft-quoted poetical sources:

Amír Khusrav, Diván, ed. Sa'íd Na'ífí / M. Darvish, Tehran 1343 sh.


Átár, Faridu'ddin, Diván, ed. Said Na'ífí, Tehran 1339 sh.

Átár, Faridu'ddin, MT = Manšīq ut-tair, ed. M. J. Mashkūr, Tehran s.d.

Bédil, Diván, lith. Bombay 1302 h.

Bédil, Kulliyát, 4 volumes, Kabul 1965 ff.


Dard, Khwajá Mir, Diván-i farsí, lith. Delhi 1309 h.

Fānī, Muhsín, Diván, ed. O. L. Tikku, Tehran 1342 sh.


Kalím, Diván, ed. by H. Partav Barijahá', Tehran 1336 sh.


Na'ífí, Diván, ed. Maqáhir Muqaffáí, Tehran 1340 sh.


Sa'ídí, Kulliyát, ed. M. A. Fúrúghí, 4 vols.: I Gulistán, II Bústán.

III ghazaliyyát, IV qasíd, ed. Tehran 1342 sh.

Tálib-i Ámūl, Diván — Kulliyát-i ashbúr, ed. Tahiri Shíháb, Tehran 1346 sh.

*Urští, Kulliyát, ed. Ghalam Husain Jawáhirí, Tehran s.d.

All the other sources are quoted in the text and the footnotes.
INTRODUCTION

There are other good poets, too, on earth—
But they say that Ghālib’s measure is something different!

It would be difficult to find a Pakistani or Indian Muslim who would not agree with this statement of Mirzā Asadullāh Ghālib—a poet whose verses have become part and parcel of everyday speech, are quoted like proverbs and sung in different tunes, and have formed a source of inspiration for later poets as well as for painters and calligraphers.

Ghālib’s life almost coincides with the final breakdown of the Mughal Empire in India, that means, with the breakdown of the political and economic system of the Muslim upper classes who had been ruling India for more than 800 years.

Delhi, since 1206 the proud capital of a rich and expanding empire, became the target of attacks and pillaging after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. Under Aurangzeb’s weak successors internal enemies like the Maharatta and Sikh proved as disastrous for the remnants of the Mughal Empire and its capital as the Muslim neighbours, whether these came as conquerors like Nādir Shāh of Iran in 1739, or as ‘helpers’ like his successor Aḥmad Shāh Abdāl Durrānī. The result of the advent of their soldiers was always the same. Struggles between the different factions at the Mughal court added to the tragedy.

Meanwhile, the British and French gained a foothold in India. They were active first in the southern parts of the sub-continent which had never, or only for a limited time, been under Mughal supremacy. With the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the British East India Company got hold of an important district in Bengal, the core of their ensuing activities. The hapless Mughal ruler Shāh ʿĀlam II ʿAftāb was blinded by the chief of the Rohillas in 1787, and he and his successors came under the tutelage of the British who extended their influence on parts of India both externally and internally. In their hands was part of the legal administration, and they reorganized the educational
system, replacing in 1835 Persian—the hitherto used official language—by English. In 1843, Sind was annexed; a few years later, Lahore and the Panjab were incorporated into the realm of British supremacy.

It was natural that the Hindus should more willingly respond to the new possibilities of education than the Muslims; for them, one foreign rule had been replaced by another, and the new rulers seemed to offer them better chances. The Muslims, however, with the pride of the former ruling classes, in general refrained from participating in a modern ‘un-Islamic’ educational and administrative system and thus lost many chances to compete with the Hindus in government offices (as far as these were allotted to Indians at all).

During this period of disintegration of the Muslim power, Mirza Asadullah opened his eyes to this world in Agra, on December 27, 1797. His parents were, like many nobles, of Turkish descent. He lost his father soon; the uncle who was in charge of his education died shortly afterwards. The premature boy spent days and nights in more or less innocent games, and the family married him—at the age of 13—to a pious girl, Umrao Begum, who was then eleven years old. The marriage proved, as one can imagine, not happy; but Ghalib’s sarcastic verses about the yoke of marriage and his nasty remarks about women and about the fetters and chains on neck and hands have been quoted almost too often by his biographers and should, perhaps, be taken with a grain of salt. Umrao Begum’s fate was even more tragic since none of the seven children she bore to Ghalib survived the first fifteen months. Still the marriage lasted almost 60 years, and Ghalib never took a second wife into his house. He has alluded, though, to an affair with a young lady, perhaps a courtesan—but nothing is known about the details of his obviously deep attachment to her, nor do we know anything about later liaisons.

During his early teens, the boy Asadullah indulged in an intense study of Persian under the guidance of a certain Abdul Samad who hailed from Iran and therefore introduced him into the genuine Persian way of expression. Shortly afterwards, Ghalib settled in Delhi. The young, handsome and charming poet was well-known in the literary circles. But soon began the long period of difficulties: Ghalib got involved in legal procedures, in the hope to get his ‘pension’ from the estate of one of his relations. But none of the claims and petitions which he filed in during 25 years yielded any result. To be sure, the poet enjoyed travelling to Calcutta in 1826; there he hoped for justice from the British authorities. In the lively atmosphere of Calcutta he got involved in a literary controversy with some of the Persian writing poets of Calcutta, followers of the Bengali poet Qatil. The poetical fruits of this journey are a number of descriptive matimawis and some qasidas. When Ghalib returned, after nearly three years to Delhi, he continued his old style of life, struggling with the authorities, drinking and gambling. He was permanently in debt and asks ironically:

Is it possible that someone should not know Ghalib?
A good poet—though of bad reputation...

During these years the poet compiled a divan of his selected Urdu verses and was engaged in gathering his Persian poetry and prose-works. In 1842, he was offered a professorship of Persian at Delhi College but declined the offer for trivial reasons. In 1847, the poet was imprisoned for three months because of gambling—a beautiful Persian poem tells of his feelings.

Ghalib’s hope to get access to the Mughal court was eventually fulfilled in 1850: the first official assignment given to him was the composition of a Persian history of the house of the Timurids—a work which he did not like and which he never finished; the Emperor himself did apparently not approve of its complicated Persian prose style. When Zafr, the poet laureate of the Mughal court died in 1854, Ghalib was ordered to correct the poems of the Emperor Bahadur Shah ‘Zafar’, like almost all his ancestors a talented poet, who wrote in Urdu. At the same time our poet was made the poetical instructor of the heir-apparent. His poems written in honour of the ruler wrapped the weak Bahadur Shah in a pompous robe of broadened Persian verses which make the reader forget that they were written only a few years before the end of the Mughal Empire.

The last Nawab of Oudh, the gay and gifted Wajid ‘Ali Shah, sometimes sent verses for correction to Ghalib; but Lucknow, the resort of elegant poets since the late 18th century was annexed by the British in 1856 and the poet-ruler deported to Calcutta. At the same time, Ghalib’s royal pupil died. One year later the so-called ‘Mutiny’ ended the Muslim rule in India.

Ghalib lost his pension once more owing to his connections with the court, and neither his friendly relations with some British officers and civil servants nor his qasidas in honour of Queen Victoria helped him much to win the favour of the new masters. The small
booklet Dastanbā in very archaic Persian, written to attract the interest of the British authorities, contains his account of the critical summer of 1857 in Delhi. As to the title of the strange composition, e.g. Dastanbā, 'A Posy of Flowers', I venture to suggest that it contains an allusion to a line of the great panegyrist Khāqānī (d. 1199) who has used this rare word in an ode to Princess Iṣnātuddīn:

In the hand of her lofty fortune I saw seven
dastanbā from stars—

در کف بخت باندش زارتران
هنف دستیوی زیبا دیدام

Was not Ghalib's booklet dedicated to the most powerful ruler of his age, Queen Victoria, the princess of truly lofty fortune, at the occasion of the conquest of India?

Delhi was a dead city in the first years after the revolt; in his letters Ghalib has described the pitiful situation of the few surviving and abiding Muslims. He himself had lost during the revolt his mentally deranged brother who had lived with him for years. His difficulties were enhanced by the fact that he had adopted the two children of his wife's nephew, *Ārif*, a talented young poet,

Whose cheek is the candle of my family.

آن يعدیه بلوه مارف نام
که رخت شمع دودمان منت

*Ārif* had died in 1852, and the elegy written for him is perhaps Ghalib's most touching Urdu poem:

لأم تها که دیکھو سرا کنوئی دن اوز
تنها گی کی گویا کی دن اوز

Ghalib's letters reveal some of the difficulties which he experienced in handling and feeding the two growing boys during those dark times.

After a while the poet formed some connections with the court of Rampur, one of the princely states which had not come under the British Crown; he visited Rampur first in 1860 together with his two grandnephews, and his poetry secured him again a certain amount of money which was sufficient for the modest maintenance of the family and for the bottle of red wine which inspired him in the evenings; his debts, however, never ended.

Even during the long and painful illness which confined him to bed for nearly three years, Ghalib did not abstain from correcting the verses younger poets would send him. He prepared his works for the press and saw them printed before he died on February 15th, 1869. One of his poetical disciples, Sayyid Ḥulfān Ḥusain, published a dirge in his memory in the Avadh Akhbar—one of the leading newspapers; this curious poem which was printed on March 9, 1869, is an artistic chronogram of fifteen verses: the first hemistich of each verse gives the Christian year 1869, the second hemistich the hijra date 1285. The centenary of Ghalib's death in 1969 has made his name better known even in the Western hemisphere thanks to numerous articles and a few books written in his honour, and with the aim of translating his poems, so well known and so much loved among the Urdu speaking people.

Ghalib's poetical output—published once more in connection with the centenary by the Panjab University Lahore—is comparatively small: there is the delightful little Urdu diwan and the Persian divān which comprises all kinds of poems, from mystical mathnawis to chronograms. Ghalib's unfinished mathnawī in honour of the prophet Muḥammad, called Abru-i gauharbār, 'The Pearl-bearing Cloud' has attracted the interest of both Western and Indian scholars during the last years. Ghalib's qasidas show his great skill in handling difficult forms. His ghazals are often powerful, but both genres become at times cumbersome owing to the heavy burden of complicated images inherited from the great poets of the Indian style. His qīf as convey some personal impressions; the quatrains are partly satirical, partly mystical. Ghalib's Persian prose comprises, besides the History of the House of Timur (Mihr-i nīmurā) and the Dastanbā, letters and a corrective study of the Persian dictionary Burhān-e qīfī which got him entangled in a heated controversy with other scholars of Persian.

Ghalib's most personal legacy are his Urdu letters, which reveal his mastery of the language and reflect his self-irony, his wit and his talent for sharp observation. Yet, they are sometimes motivated by the wish to display his wit and are, thus, rather poetical reflections than realistic 'photographic' pictures.

The poet was not too much loved by many of his contemporaries; his way of life did not agree with the ideals of pious Muslims; his pride, even arrogance in dealing with literary enemies was well-known,
and the difficulty of his style made his antagonists joke:

We did understand the verses of Mir, and what Saudâ says—
But Ghalib's verses!—Save he and God, we know
not who can understand them.

On the other hand, the sources often mention and praise his hospitality and fidelity, and unsurpassed was his talent for refined conversation, that typical expression of Mughal culture. This talent is palpable in his letters and, to a certain extent, in the ingenious way of inserting colloquial sentences into the most complicated and highfown Urdu verses.

Ghalib's fame throughout the country was to a large extent due to Ḥâl's book Yâd-gâr-i Ghalib, which appeared in 1896 and has since been considered the standard work on his work. Muḥammad Iqâbil, the poet-philosopher of Indo-Pakistan, has mentioned the name of the great poet among those spiritual guides who showed him the way to poetry during his formative period; in his own poetry he has quoted his verses several times. Ghalib, buried in the dust of Delhi, was, for him, the peer of Goethe who rests in the "rosegarden of Weimar".

* * * *

These are the dry and outward facts, some glimpses of the life of the greatest Urdu poet in the 19th century who was also the last classical writer in the field of Persian poetry in India.

The methods of modern comparative literature have not yet been applied to Ghalib (nor to other Persian poets); but one would be tempted to interpret Ghalib's life according to a pattern developed by Robert Minder for the German poet Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) who was only a few years senior to the Muslim poet, viz., the pattern Splendor—Chaos—Play. These three elements, following each other and interwoven with each other, can easily be detected in Ghalib's life and in his poetry: there is the splendour of the firework which he has used so often as a metaphor for the state of his burning heart, the chaotic background of a life spent in restlessness after the few joyful years of his splendid youth, and there is the playful way of scattering unexpected images and rhetorical figures over his poetry and prose—an ease and playfulness acquired by hard intellectual labour.

For Ghalib was not a poet who composed his verses without effort; he has described the secret of poetry as:

drawing the heart-blood from the veins of speech.

but he was able to offer the reader the most elaborate results of his artistic endeavour in gracefully moving lines, comparable to the reflection of figures dancing on the dark and chaotic waters of a torrent.

* * * *

It is revealing to look at our poet's names—for the importance of the personal name, and even more the poetical pen-name, is even greater in the Islamic lands and especially in India than it is in the West, and often permits us some insight into a poet's or mystic's character, his ambitions and ideals.

His parents had called him Asadullah, 'Lion of God', that is one of the surnames of ʿAlî, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law and the fourth caliph of Islam. The pen-name 'Ghalib' is likewise an oft-used surname of the same caliph ʿAlî ibn ʿAbî Ṭâlib al-Ghalib, the 'triumphant conqueror'. Thus his names form a homage to the hero of Shi'a Islam, the religious form to which the poet was inclined, contrary to his family who were Sunnites. Ghalib could easily play with his nom-de-plume:

* * * *

However, in times of despair he could close a ghazal with the line:

Wherever you see my pen-name Ghalib in a ghazal,
erase it, and write instead Maghâlub (= 'conquered', 'overcome')

Such a pun on the words ghâl and maghâlub is found as early as in Nîghti's epic poem Khvârau Shîrîn, and this little instance shows how deeply Ghalib was steeped in the poetical tradition of Iran and India.

When he started writing, Persian literature in the sub-continent had a history of more than 800 years, and its outward form in the Arabic-Persian quantitative meter had never changed: the long qasâfa—mostly a panegyric, a satire, or a hymn, the shorter ghâzal as vehicle
for love poetry, mystical or profane, the qawwāl or 'occasional piece'—all of them keeping the rhyme enunciated in the first verse throughout the ensuing poem; further the mathnawī in which the hemistichs rhyme together two by two and which thus allowed the development of longer, mainly epical and didactic poems. The quatrain often served for aphoristic purposes, and was a genre of which mystical and erotic poets were likewise fond. A by-product, produced by connecting a number of ghazals in the same meter by a verse which expresses the general Stimmung of the chain of poems, is the tarkib-band and the tarjī-band.

These inherited forms had been elaborated and refined by numberless poets in Iran proper, in Turkey, and in the Indian subcontinent. As early as in the 11th century—only a few decades after Mahmūd of Ghazna's conquest of Northwest India—the fame of the poets in the Panjab, Abūl-Faraj Rūmī and Masʿūd ibn Sa’d-ı Salāmān, spread widely over Iran, and with Amīr Khusraw (d.1325), the virtuoso in poetry and music and sweet-talking 'Parrot of India', the new style of Persian poetry opened its first buds: in his verses we find some of the complicated, even abstruse metaphors and the extremely artistic technique which were later so common in the so-called sābk-i hindī, the 'Indian Style' of Persian poetry.

It was at the Mughal court that this poetry lived through its 'Indian Summer', as Ethé has called it; poignantly: glowing and pathetic in the masterly verses of ʿUrūfī (d. 1592), more cerebral in the poems of his contemporary Faizī and, slightly later during the reign of Jahangīr, in the qasīdas and ghazals of the fertile Tāhī-āmūlī, highly sophisticated in Naṣīrī's literary work. Suffice it to mention, out of the hundreds of poets who swarmed to the generously laid tables of the Mughal nobles, the names of Kalīm (perhaps the most attractive poet of the 17th century), of Qudsī and of Ghānī Kashmīrī, and to remember those poets who were connected with the luckless heir apparent Dārā Shikoh; some of them, like Sarmād, were executed like the prince at the hand of Aurangzeb and his officials. And in the later days of Aurangzeb's reign, when literary and artistic life was no longer encouraged by the ruler, the poets retired into a world of fancy; the tunes of weariness and despair—already palpable in the earlier Mughal poetry—became shriller and more dissonant; the complicated conceits of Indo-Persian literature waxed so difficult and cumbersome that some of the poetical and prose works of Naṣīr ʿAlī Sirhindī (d. 1697) and Mīrzā Bedīl (d. 1721) became almost incomprehensible even for a native Persian (if we believe the critical statement of the Persian refugee ʿAlī Ḥāzīn, whose style in turn was criticized by Khān Arzū).

Persian poetry had always chanted the withering of the rose of happiness; for everything on earth is transitory, as the Qur’ān attests. The poets have echoed these words in numerous metaphors and have combined the complaint about the instability of life with the quest for immortal beauty, influenced in their world-view and their imagery by the Muslim mystics who tried to desery the Eternal and Unique Source of Life and Beauty behind the manifold manifestations of this world.

The beloved to whom the poets address their verses is always considered cruel; and he/or she (Persian knows no grammatical gender) can be interpreted by turns as a noble virgin living in purdah whom one knows only by hearsay or through a picture; as a coy courtesan, fickle by profession; as a young attractive boy, preferably fourteen years old; as the despotic ruler; or as the Lord Himself Whose will is inscrutable and Whose Essence is beyond the reach of human thought. The 'rival' and the 'reproacher', so closely associated with the love-drama, fit as well into the scenery of court-intrigue, or they could represent the dry-as-dust theologians and lawyer-divines who, fettered by the chains of tradition, envy the lover who dares to sing of the mystery of intoxicated love. The special charm of Persian and related, viz., Turkish and Urdu poetry, consists of this ambiguity which permits different interpretations of an outwardly simple verse.

Innumerable are metaphors connected with suffering and with death in this poetry—the poets knew of the Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied (T. S. Eliot), and believed that death is the only way which leads to permanent union with the beloved—in whatever sense we may interpret this term. Love is proved and matured by constant suffering, as gold is purified in the melting pot. That is why the poets never tired of inventing new images to symbolize this suffering in love: the nightingale who is wounded by the rose, that radiant symbol of Divine Beauty and Majesty, or Majnūn the demented lover, conversing with the animals in the desert, or Farhād, the deceived worshipper of Princess Shirīn. The polo ball as well may symbolize the head of the lover in the tresses of the beloved; the liver is roasted in the fire of love, the house destroyed by the torrent. Many other images which were taken from the Qur’an.
or from Persian history, from the colourful garden or the pastimes of feudal lords served the same purpose.

The metaphors and symbols of Persian poetry are restricted; they have been elaborated during the centuries according to the taste and skill of each poet. But the repertoire of words was almost inexhaustible: the Persian poet who was in need of a rare rhyme or wanted to surprise his reader could easily recur to the Arabic vocabulary. Not the genuine expression of personal feelings was regarded as the poet's goal: the real art was to surpass former poets. The more time passed Persian writing poets would compose their qaṣidas and ghazals on a given zamān 'ground', e.g., according to a given meter and rhyme as preformed by the previous masters; this skeleton was, then, covered, embellished and ornamented with words according to the skill, wit and erudition of the ambitious poet.

The Western reader gets perhaps bored when meeting for the fifteenth time with a metaphor associated with Joseph and his marvellous beauty, with Moses and the Burning Bush, with the life-giving breath of Jesus, or the world-showing glass of the Persian ruler Jamshid—but did not European literature live, for many centuries, from the material furnished by Greek mythology and biblical language respectively? And when a modern dramatist expresses the tragedy of a family in terms taken from Antigone or Oedipus, or sings his love in the disguise of figures borrowed from Shakespeare, when Ezra Pound or T. S. Eliot insert learned and subtle quotations into their poems they do nothing else but what the Oriental poets have always done when they borrow their motifs from the Qur'ān, the Shāhnāme, or the epics of Nizāmī, "Aṭṭār and Maulānā Rūmī. The essence is the same: love, jealousy and death, whether the experience be that of Othello or of Khusrāw Parwīz. However, translations of Persian or Urdu poetry which convey only the rather meagre contents of this kind of lyrics without explaining the subtilities of style, the allusions and the whole cobweb-like system of rhetorical devices can never impress the Western reader who is too often inclined to distill a Weltanschauung out of the arabesque-like verses of Hāfiz and his compatriots. It should always be remembered: Persian poetry is learned poetry—much more so than medieval European poetry, much more even than the verses of John Donne and other Metaphysical poets.

The poet should be judged "as craftsman like other craftsmen, a goldsmith of words, a jeweller of verbal images." This remark of A. J. Arberry about the Arabic poets can as well be applied to those writing in Persian, Urdu and Turkish. This poetry lacks the spontaneity which we associate with the word 'lyrical'; the poets rather prefer to surprise the reader with their erudition in all fields of human knowledge (often hoping for an adequate reward for their performances). Persian poems therefore demand from the student an extensive study of the numerous rhetorical figures and a careful interpretation of each symbol and metaphor, and perhaps their most interesting aspect for the reader is to observe the poet in his artistic performance. He has to find out how he uses the device of harmonically selecting the motifs or that of phantastic aetiology in an unusual way; whether he is able to allude to three parts of the body in one hemistich, or to combine four allusions to religious items in two lines, whether he finds a new rhyme-word in a sequence of rhymes, or conceals a witty amphibolog in an innocent phrase. By such a careful analysis the verse reveals new dimensions every time we read it; comparing it with similar verses by earlier writers we enjoy the new and unexpected turn given to an old metaphor, the surprising introduction of a novel subject.

This is the kind of intellectual game which Ghālib played so well—not always avoiding in his verses the danger of puzzling the reader in the 'labyrinth of ... tortuous inventiveness', to use once more an expression coined by Arberry. For this reason it is almost impossible to adequately translate his verses into any Western language. For if the translation of classical Persian poetry is not an easy task, that of Indo-Persian poetry is rendered even more difficult owing to the peculiarities of the so-called Indian Style. The use of abstract infinitives, often put in the plural, and unusual grammatical forms, are typical of the later period of Indo-Persian poetry. And when the classical poets followed certain rules in the harmonious combination of motifs, the Indo-Persian writers showed an inclination towards uncouth compositions of images and words. Inherited metaphors are sometimes broken up and put together in a different sequence, a method by which the poets achieved surprising kaleidoscopic effects. The categories of time and space were now and then interchanged, optical and acoustical metaphors were blended together, cause and effect strangely mixed.

The traditional poet would compare the small mouth of his beloved to a dot, to the tiny letter mīm, or to a nothing; Tālib-i Amuli, however, turns the metaphor and complains that he has become so silent,

as if my mouth had been a wound which is now healed,

e.g., which is no longer visible. And Ghālib, in turn, consoles himself...
when his beloved refuses to kiss him and scolds him instead—how could she kiss him at all since she has no mouth?

Another trend in Indo-Persian poetry is a predilection for gruesome motifs. The roses turn more and more into bleeding wounds or threatening flames, just as in earlier times the tulips were considered the blood-stained shrouds of the martyrs. The symbolism of fire occupies an even greater room than in classical poetry, as the 

Afrâm of the poets in India, from ‘Urfî to Ghâlib, can easily prove. The poets who formerly put only salt on their wounded hearts now use diamond powder, so that Ghâlib can inform his reader that the main ingredient in the salve for the wounds of his heart is pulverized diamond


— the hardest element conceivable—which adds to the gall. ‘Shroud’ and ‘scratching nail’, the ‘blister of the foot’ and the ‘stone flung by children at the lunatic’ are expressions used frequently by the 17th century poets in India, and although most poets in the Persian tongue had described the endless way of love and longing, it was the Indo-Persian poets who introduced into lyrics the concept of khâmâyâ, i.e. ‘yawning’, and then ‘insatiable thirst’, the thirst of the shore to embrace the sea.

Longing and breaking down—these are two favourite subjects of Indo-Muslim poetry (probably influenced by the mystical teaching which makes the ‘breaking of the lower soul’ a prerequisite for the mystical path). One of Ghâlib’s most ingenious lines—scarcely preceded by any other poet—states that nothing but the breakdown of hope and wishes is the result of loving attachment:

Heart pressed unto heart were so-to-speak a ‘lip of regret’.

That means lips pressed together in regret and sorrow.

This example shows that great poets—but only these!—could achieve impressive results in this style; the reader who perseveres in struggling his way through hundreds of complicated lines will suddenly find some verses, dark and glowing, or unforgettable aphorisms full of despair and marvellous wording. The ‘glad tidings of being killed’—again a mystical concept—is a common expression among those poets who, like ‘Urfî, would boast:

I went to the door of the executioner’s house, singing a ghâzal...

Irmân An Sîr Zâna ganzeh ko yaî ko kohn

Khâmâyâ khâmâyâ Gandhân Zâra o kohn

Ghâlib has often echoed these tunes:

Don’t ask how happy the yearning ones are when they see the place for execution!

It is the Id of expectation (that) the sword should become naked.

The crescent which announces the ‘Id al-fitr, e.g., the Festival at the end of the fasting period, is compared in a traditional image to a scimitar; and as much as people long for the sight of the new moon which brings to an end the month of fasting as much do the lovers enjoy the sight of the scimitar drawn from the scabbard at the place where they shall be sacrificed. The word ‘Id in connection with the new moon points to the Festival of Breaking the Fast, but in connection with slaughtering it bears a relation to the second festival of the Islamic calendar, the Feast of Sacrifices at the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

In a small example it can be shown how much Ghâlib stands in the tradition of classical Persian poetry; one of his verses which is often quoted to convey the idea of his dynamic world-view, e.g.: Come and behold the fervour of my longing to see you—

Behold my dropping from my eyelashes like tears

With this the poet elaborates an image which can be found in one of Khâqân’s ghârâls when he complains that he, being like to the teardrop, is too weak for reaching the eyelashes.

Notwithstanding his sharp attacks against the Indo-Persian poets Ghâlib himself follows the Indian style to some extent. The frequent use of abstract infinitives, even in his Urdu poetry,
here, and so do long sequences of genitive constructions which resist a poetical translation.

But in spite of all its intrinsic difficulties one cannot but admit that this poetry has a charm of its own. I venture to guess that our generation who is used to the enigmatic style of modern poems as well as to the weird images of some expressionist poetry, and has also learned to appreciate the beauty of metaphysical poetry may find a certain mental pleasure in disentangling the complicated arabesque—like twists of Indo-Persian and classical Urdu poetry, whose most outstanding master was Ghālib. The reader of Ghālib's poetry will be amply rewarded. He will suddenly find verses which are tender and human:

\[\text{In union be gracious according to the measure of (the lover's) endurance, for it means death for the thirsty when the water rises over his head.}\]

There is the proud attestation of his fidelity:

\[\text{May my bier, carried on people's shoulder, be an example for those with hearts: No one leaves the street of his beloved on his own feet.}\]

And there are again those consoling words which friends in Pakistan use to recite to parting friends:

\[\text{Parting and union have each a flavor of its own; Go away a thousand times—come a hundred thousand times!}\]

Even more frequent are such verses in Ghālib's Urdu poetry:

\[\text{Urdu as a literary language had flourished in the Deccan since the early 16th century; its poetry was partly influenced by Persian models. It was surely no accident that its reception in Delhi as a medium of poetry coincides with the breakdown of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb's death (1707). The newly discovered literary medium was immediately accepted by major and minor poets; the great love-poet Mir Taqi Mir, the satirist Saudā, the mystic Mir Dard, the romantic Mir Ḥasan, all purified and refined the language, made it pliable enough to express every nuance of human feelings. Their poetry was understood by the masses, by the people sitting at the doors of the Great Mosque in Delhi, while the sophisticated Persian poetry could be appreciated only by the members of the educated classes, and became more and more petrified since it had lost contact with the spoken Persian of Iran.}\]

Owing to the successive disasters which came over the once so glorious capital, the imperial Delhi, many poets migrated in the second half of the 18th century to Lucknow, and there, at the court of a dynasty of cheerful rulers, Urdu was polished until it could flawlessly reflect the dazzling luxury of the court and the gaiety of the Lucknow society, but was also able to produce mourning-poems for ʿAbūl, the Prophet's grandson, in deep coloured images and dramatic scenes.

This was the language in which Ghālib wrote his masterpieces. Who could surpass the lines in a ghazal which is a favourite object of study for European Urdu scholars:

\[\text{Sleep is his, sweet intoxication is his, the nights are his, On whose arm your tresses lie, dishevelled...}\]

\[\text{ليدين كل كيه دماغ اس كيه راني اس كيه} \]
\[\text{ترني زرتشت جي كأي بازو بر بريشان هوگي} \]

Who save Ghālib could invent the verse:

\[\text{You may kindly call me whenever you like—I am not time past, that I could not return!}\]

\[\text{سير بيانهو كي بلانو سجيب قاجيو جي وقت} \]
\[\text{سین غيا وقت نبيس هون كي بھيرا نبي نسکون} \]

We find mystical lines which show Ghālib's sound knowledge of the Islamic tradition, besides amusing verses like the \textit{qītha} of a \textit{ghazal} which is made up completely from juridical technical terms:

\[\text{پھير گھیلا دم عدلال تاز} \]
\[\text{گھر بازو نوجانی چن} \]

There are swinging songs of wine and love as well as the expression of the hope that his beloved may not sever all relations with him—even
if their relation be enmity, it would be more welcome than her indifference:

قلم كچہ نہ نما وہ ہم ے
کچہ نہیں چہ تو عدالت جوہ سبی

But darkness and despair loomed large in the poetry of Ghālib who sighs,

I am the dried up lip of those dying from thirst...

لا چاچو در تشکلی سردگان کا

This darkness is the background for the sparkling fires, the gushing floods which threaten his very existence. The hope for death is at times predominant in his verses, and still, the poet advises his reader to enjoy each melody of life, be it that of happiness or that of mourning; for 'the instrument of life will be silent one day!'

لغه عاشقی غم کو بیبی ای دل غبیبت جاتی

ہی سیاہا رجیلا کا پہ لازیتی ایک دن

Ghālib knew that nobody could surpass him in Urdu, but he was likewise sure that he was on equal footing with the greatest representatives of Persian poetry, and that his knowledge in poetical matters was as comprehensive as his capacity for literary work:

When others hew their axes into the mine (of rubies),
I make a night-attack on Badakhshan

دیگران گر تیخہ برکان می زند
سن شیخون بر پدشان می زرم

He wanted to conquer the whole province in which the precious stones were found, and not to contend himself with a single mine which might yield only a few jewels...

* * * *

The aim of our book is simply this:

we want to introduce the Western reader into the complex imagery of Ghālib's poetry and to facilitate his access to a literary field which has still to be discovered by the lovers of comparative literature. In the present moment, this can be only a first attempt. The verses from

earlier Persian poetry which have been chosen to explain some of Ghālib's images have been plucked at random, not systematically; everyone acquainted with classical Persian poetry will be able to add other examples. But completeness was not intended and would be impossible as long as large parts of Persian poetry still remain unknown to us; besides, such an attempt would by far transgress a single scholar's capacity. Still, we hope that we can convey at least a certain idea as to what extent Ghālib was indebted to his predecessors, and in how far he surpasses them with his ingenious ideas.
called 'the Parrot of India', but at the same time implies his claim of superiority even over this master of style, since in Ghalib's opinion, only Persian-born poets were able to write that flawless style which Indo-Persian poets but rarely achieve.

As to the selection of the third poem, I would need some careful thought. I might choose one of Ghalib's poignant and sarcastic quatrains in which he jokes about the lucky pilgrim who walks so full of joy that the poet understands that he has left a quarrelsome wife behind him, and therefore envies him.

Or else I might select a qaṣīda, preferably Nr. XXVI which begins with a marvellous hymn about the miraculous powers of 'those who have got insight'.

but ends in an insipid panegyric for the last Mughal ruler. But finally I would probably turn my predilection to Ghalib's little poem on his cat in which the baroque wording contrasts so charmingly with his affection for the graceful animal of supple movements.

I have in this world a cat of pure nature,
The wave of her gait is of a fairy-child's wing ...
2. Time (or: the covenant) has no loyalty; the single moment is a nice booty—
dance in the blandishment of the loyal covenant from the
beautiful ones!

3. Constant seeking is delight—what do you talk of getting
over the way?
Give up walking—dance at the sound of the caravan bell!

4. We have been thriving and have walked gracefully in the
meadows—
o flame, dance in melting our straw and our thorns!

5. Take the way of the mystical dance (sama*) to the melody of the owl,
and dance likewise in the passion (hawâ, also ‘air’) of the
trembling of the Kingbird’s wing!

6. In love, the spreading out (in cheer) does not reach an end—
become like a whirlwind of dust and dance in the air!

7. Leave aside the decayed pictures of the dear friends—
dance to the trumpet of mourning and at the banquet of con-
dolence!

8. Like the wrath of the pious and the friendship of the hypocrites
be not in yourself, but dance in the throng!

9. Do not seek pain from burning, nor joy from opening—
dance recklessly in the arms of hot storm and morning-breeze!

10. Ghalib, with that exultation (of thinking): “Upon whom
do you depend?”
Wax forth from yourself and dance in the fetters of affliction!

The necessarily pedestrian translation can only convey the
contents, without reflecting the charms of the poem. In its external
form, it is strictly classical, as poems with the rhyme-words ‘dance!’,
‘the dance’, ‘I will dance’, etc. are by no means rare in Persian poetry.
In fact, classical Persian mystical poetry contains a rather large number
of verses in which the author either tells himself to rise and dance, or
else prays the movement that frees him from all earthly concern.
This particular kind of poems in praise of dance (alien to the rigid
orthodoxy of Islam and therefore often objected to by the pious)
belongs to a much larger tradition in which poets of all races and
religion have praised the dance, still preserving a dim memory of its
essentially sacred character.

Indeed, dancing occupies a special place in almost every religion. One has called dance the ‘absolute play’, for, as the catholic theologian
Karl Rahner once remarked: every play is, in its deepest meaning a
dance, a Reigen (round-dance) which revolves around Reality. It
takes man away from the world, from the gravity and density of our
earthly existence, and imbues him with a sense of closeness to heaven.

As it is well-known from ancient Greek tradition, two deities
were connected with dance: they are Dionysos who enraptures
man in wild dances and carries him forth from himself, and Apollo
who teaches him to move in harmonious forms, and fixed rhythm. In
primitive societies, dance is often connected with religious purposes,
be it that man wants to influence the spirits by his movements, as is the
case in the dances of the hunters who imitate the movements of the
game they intend to stalk, or that the faithful try to repeat the har-
monious movement which they ascribe to superhuman powers. In
many societies magic practices are connected with dance: at the
times of eclipses and of war and during the highly critical occasions
of human life, e.g., death, birth and marriage, special dances are
considered necessary to avert the evil spirits which might wish to interfere
with the great event in question and thus threaten the happiness and
health of the family or clan. To give an example: the villagers in
some parts of Eastern Prussia used to dance around the bier of a de-
ceased family member. In medieval Christian painting a reflection of
this thought is found in the frequently used motif of the Totentanz,
the most famous example of which stem from Holbein's brush—
Death dances with the human being whom he wants to carry away into
his kingdom. The medieval paintings had reflected the horrors of the
times when plague decimated the population (first in 1348). The
terrors of the wars in our century have resulted once more, in whole
series of 'Totentanz' in European painting, like those by the German
artist HAP Grieshaber.

Primitive society used dance as a means for warding off evil
spirits, but also as an imitation of the movements of nature: examples
from northern Europe are, the dances at Easter and summer solstice
in which the movement of the sun is 'repeated' by dancing in order to
'renew' the strength of the luminary by the magical practice. One
should not forget the exhausting rain-dances in Australia which are
executed for producing rain. To secure fertility, dances on the fields
or around the seedbeds in springtime were quite common in Europe.

In all these dances, the simplest and most frequently used form
is the circle and round-dance, which evolved from the practice of
describing a magic circle around a certain object. Such circles were
drawn to confine, hence possess an object, or to attain a share in its
power, or else to impart it with some power of one's own. That is
the meaning of the circumambulation around sacred objects which is
known in most religions—from the Jaw'a'h around the Ka'bah in Islam
to dance around the Christmas-tree in Western countries. By means
of this act some of the power of the sacred object penetrates the wor-
sipper who seeks to acquire part of its mana.

In many early societies, dance was considered a most valuable
gift for the deities. It was a kind of offering of beautiful forms by
which man tried to express his feelings of gratitude toward the higher
powers; these in turn, were imagined as enjoying the same delights as
human rulers did. Indian and Indonesian religious dances are in part
developed out of this peculiar attitude; indeed, a dancer who fulfils
the thousands of complicated rules of a classical Indian religious dance
in perfect harmony and beauty has brought something precious to
tell the gods. Similar ideas were formerly alive even in the early
Christian church. In some places the faithful would dance in honour
of the Virgin Mary and the martyrs. The official church has never
approved of these dances, but has rather issued a number of decrees
against dancing of which that of the council of Toledo in 589 is best
known. Nevertheless, it is precisely in Spain (Seville) that a sacred
dance is still performed once a year in some churches. On the other
hand, the idea of dancing in honour of the Virgin is a well-known topic
in literature and folklore: a poor and helpless girl, or a destitute juggler
dedicate the only thing they possess, namely their dances, to the Virgin
who is to find pleasure in their sincerity and in the beauty of such a
spectacle; as a consequence the hero or heroine is proven worthy of
eternal beatitude.

But even more important than the magical aspects of dance is
the fact that it can carry a man out of himself and bring him—so to
speak—in touch with a higher reality. Numerous examples of
ecstatic dances can be found in many primitive societies, from the
Shamans in Siberia to the Red Indians in America. The prophets in
old Israel attempted to reach the ecstatic state through the practice
of dancing exercises (1. Sam. 19, 19; 1. Kings 18, 29.) The underlying
reason for such a behaviour is simple: by spinning around one's
own axis or turning around a specific centre one feels exempt from the
law of gravitation; in a centrifugal movement the body flies away
from his original centre of gravity and seems to draw closer to the
celestial spheres. For this reason dances are quite common in the
ecclesiastic communities of the ancient Near East and Europe—and, we
may add, up to this very day. Considering the dangerous implications
of such dances which seem to set people free from the rigid system
of law and duty, early Christian theologians had reacted energetically.

"Where there is dance, there is Satan" says St. Chrysostomus. Yet
eccastic dance played an important role in a few medieval heretic
movements, like that of the Korizantes and Dansatores who wandered
for a short while through Europe; in 17th century Russia the Chlysists
GHALIB'S DANCING POEM

and Skopz considered dancing as a means of elevation to higher spheres. This ecstatic dance developed particularly in Islam, although Islamic orthodoxy condemned it as violently as St. Chrysostomus did for Christianity. The sama²—originally only a musical gathering, then the whirling dance of those who were enraptured by the music—was known since the mid 9th century among the mystics of Baghdad; they opened the first place for sama³—meetings in 864. The question if and how far sama³ was licit became from that time onwards one of the most controversial problems in Islamic mysticism. The long dissertations found in the classical handbooks of Sufism, like Sarraj’s Kitab al-luma, 8 Quashair’s Risala, 9 Husayn’s Kashf al-mahjab 10 and many other works show how engaged defenders of both viewpoints were in the discussions that ensued. The problem remained unsolved throughout the centuries. In India, some of the mystical orders permitted sama (like the Chishtiya), while others, like the Naqshbandiya, were strictly against it. Every group tried to defend their own viewpoint in exhaustive books and articles filled with quotations from the Qur’an, the Prophetic traditions and the works of the Fathers. 11

The sama³ became institutionalized in the Mevlevi order in Turkey (the Whirling Dervishes) in the late 13th century, and nobody who has witnessed a performance of mystical dance in Konya, the centre of the Mevlevi, can forget its breathtaking beauty. 12 The biographies of saints, especially in the Eastern part of the Muslim world, often contain stories about people who practised sama³ and died in the midst of their dancing as a result of their acute agitation. A strange Western echo of the feelings of a participant in the sama³ is the “Ode, by a Western Spinning Dervish: The Secret of the Universe” by Edward Dowden (d. 1913), who tries to portray the emotion of constant spinning in consonance with everything created:

...as Time spins off into Eternity,
And Space into the immate Immensity,
And the Finite into God’s Infinity—
spin, spin, spin, spin. 16

Since dance is connected with leaving the earthly sphere it is often considered to be a movement peculiar to the gods. Dancing deities exist not only in ancient Mexico, but even the Phoenicians knew a Baal Marqed, a ‘Lord of the Dance’. The most famous example of this type of deity is Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, that terrible dancer (nataraja) with four arms who dances through the world with dreadful and yet spellbinding movements. And as the Greeks confronted Dionysos and Apollo, India knows not only the deity who dances destruction but also the harmonious dance of Krishna, Vishnu’s incarnation; he plays and leads the round-dance being surrounded by the gopis, those cowherd girls who symbolise the individual souls, each gopi imagining that she alone dances with the divine beloved.

The idea that dance is the typical movement of those freed from the laws of gravity is reflected in the Middle Ages in poetry and painting. According to Gregorius of Nyssa, the great Cappadocian churchfather of the 4th century, in the first created paradise a dance of all those touched by the power of the Logos was performed, until all this sweet harmony was destroyed by Adam’s sin; at the end of the world, however, there will be a new dance performed by all those who have been admitted to Paradise. 17 “There is a dance in Heaven” is indeed the beginning of an old Dutch song, and the delightful paintings of Fra Angelico show this everlasting dance: the blessed ones and the angels dance together around the source of eternal Love and Beauty. 18 The concept that everything created revolves in a kind of dance around the source of life, is already found in Platonic philosophy. Plotin and Philo have expressed similar ideas about the well-organized dance of the spheres and of the spirits spinning around eternal Beauty, 19 and the Christian fathers, otherwise so inimical to dance, have gladly adopted the image. David’s dance before the ark (2. Sam. 6,14) became for them a symbol of this wondrous dance of the spirit around the Lord.

In the New Testament we read Christ’s word “I have played the flute but you did not dance” (Matt. 11,17); due to this saying the heavenly dance came to be associated with Jesus himself; the Church father Hippolyt held that the divine Logos is the sovereign performer in the eternal dance. The gnostic Acta Johnnnis (II 12) use the same vocabulary, depicting Jesus as the heavenly musician to whose melodies everything moves in spiritual dance. 50 Medieval German mystics, especially Mechthild of Magdeburg, were extremely fond of this image and the genre of Geistliches Tanzthod, i.e., the ‘spiritual dancing song’ was often used by the medieval German nuns to express their longing for Christ in tender verses. 51 Later, Jacob Boehme describes the highest bliss as the moment when the soul enters “into the Inner Choir, where it joineth hands and danceth with Sophia, or the Divine Wisdom”. 52 This symbolism so greatly cherished by the medieval mystics, is echoed even today, by the beautiful Ronda ‘Jesus’ by the Chilean Nobel-prize winner Gabriela Mistral, to whom Spanish poetry
owes some of its finest dance poems, recalling in very modern language the age-old traditional feeling that dance is the movement of the cosmos. With her ronda, Gabriela Mistral is an outstanding representative of the numberless poets and poetesses who have used the dancing image in their literary works—be it specimens of modern Latin American poetry, or the graceful and enchanting dancing verses by E. E. Cummings. To mention only one outstanding example in German literature, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (d. 1925) elaborated the motif of dance from his earliest religious poems to the cryptic verses in the ‘Sonette an Orpheus’.

The largest number of examples of this dance imagery is again found in the Islamic world. As already mentioned, the samā’ was practised by the Sūfis from the 9th century. Yaḥyā ibn Muḥādh (d. 872) is, as far as we can see, the first to sing in short and touching Arabic verses about man’s revolving in the love of God:

The Truth we have not found;
So, dancing, we beat the ground!
Is dancing reprieved in me,
Who wonders distraught for Thee?
In Thy valley we go around
And therefore we beat the ground.23

The classical example of the spinning and the ensuing state of annihilation in the new centre of gravity is the metaphor of the moth which flies around the candle until it is burnt to gain new life in union, a story told for the first time by Ḥallāj, the martyr-mystic of Baghdad.24

But even without the moth-and-candle motif the range of dancing symbolism would be wide enough. We would expect it to become popular in Persian poetry only after the time of Jālāluddin Rūmî, the spiritual initiator of the Whirling Dervishes, but a short review of the poetry of his predecessor Farīduddin Āṭṭār (d. 1220), one of the most prolific writers in Persian mysticism, shows an abundance of verses in which the image of dancing is used in association with intoxication and the rending of his garments, in short, as symbol for that spiritual rapture in which the poet claimed to live since pre-eternity.25 The reader as well is called to dance and to cast off the fetters of this world. Āṭṭār’s younger contemporary Saʿdi of Shirāz praises in his Bastān the intoxicated dance and alludes several times to the lovers whose ‘soul dances when they listen to the word of the friend’.26 And the oft-used expression that he who dances ‘tramples the world under his feet’, i.e., no longer cares for it, is found in his lyrics.27 Perhaps the most daring expressions of the mystic’s ecstatic dance ‘with God’ can be found in Rūzbehān Ḵāfḵī’s (d. 1209) writings.28

In Rūmî’s work, then, dance symbolism reached its apex and perfection. The tradition tells how the mystic would fall into an ecstatic state when listening to the melodious sound of the harmonies of the goldsmiths in the bazaar in Konya, or to the chatter of the watermill in the lovely suburb of Meram; he would, then, spin around himself, reciting and singing poetry. A careful analysis of his poems indeed reveals that many of them were born in the throes of rhythmical movement, and the reader is often tempted to follow this movement, being more transported by the sound and rhythm than by the semantics of the text. By virtue of his ‘lending ear to the “inward song of the soul”,’29 Rūmî has used the imagery of dancing frequently: in one of his quatrains he describes how the eternal Beloved ‘dances on the screen of his heart and teaches him the art of dancing’.30 Perhaps the finest description of the mystical dance of the Beloved is the short ghazal which begins with the words:

I saw my friend, he went around the house...

The samā’ is ‘nourishment for the soul’,32 and when the lover touches the soil with his dancing feet, the water of life will gush forth from the darkness.33 Taking over neoplatonic ideas, the poet compares the spinning of the lover around the beloved to the movement of the spheres around the moon. This idea has also been expressed in some of the later theoretical explanations of the ritual of the Whirling Dervishes. The lover who enters the mystical dance is loftier than the lover, for the call to samā’ comes from Heaven; he enters a place which is beyond heaven and earth, even beyond the Divine Throne.34 And one of the comparisons most highly favoured by Rūmî as well as by later poets is that of the dust-particles which dance around the central sun to the lovers who in turn, move around their divine beloved—the word dharrā, ‘dust particle’ and ‘atom’, cannot but recall to the modern mind the movement of the atoms around their nucleus... In such a mystical round-dance the soul looks towards the beloved and becomes in a certain way united with the centre, since only the power of the central sun can make the particles move.

Apart from the traditional cosmic explanation of the mystical dance Rūmî went so far as to associate the story of God’s revelation
on Mount Sinai with the dance-motif (Sura 7/139). The Qur'an describes how the mountain was split asunder by the impact of overwhelming revelations, an event which is called by Rûmî "The Sinai began to dance," for the movement of the mountain appears to him as a dance of ecstasy, during which it unrivets itself and attains the state of annihilation, scattered and piecemeal in the presence of God—
an exact counterpart of man who will be naughted in God as a result of his dance. Once the spirit is freed by such a dance from the fetters of worldly density and has attained a life in union, he sees that each tree, each plant in the garden is dancing, touched by the spring-breeze of love; only those branches which are dried up or frozen do not participate in this movement that permeates all stages of being.

These few examples show that in the Mevlevi tradition, dance means both dying and being revived; e.g., dying from this world and living in the larger cosmic harmony, in permanent union with God. Annihilation and duration in God, fanâ and baqa, the twofold goal of mysticism can thus be expressed in the symbolism of mystical dance.

When Friedrich Rückert, the German orientalist-poet (1788-1866), translated in 1819 a number of poems of Jalâlûddîn Rûmî in a rather free adaption, he found an exquisite formulation for the mystery of dance:

 Wer die Kraft des Reigens kennt, lebt in Gott,
Denn er weiss, wie Liebe tötet—Allah Hu
or, in W. Hastic's English rendering of the Rückert translation:

Who knows Love's mazy circling, ever lives in God,
For Death, he knows, is Love abounding:—Allah Hu.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the Austrian writer, has in one short sentence alluded to this secret of the mystical dance as he had learned it from Rückert's translation of Rûmî: it means, to recognize that life and death, passing away and resurrection are intimately related, are part of each other, as movements in the eternal dance.

This is the tradition out of which Ghalib's verses on dance should be understood.

For Jalâlûddîn Rûmî's symbolism was largely accepted by the Persian speaking mystics. No poet has influenced the literatures of Iran, Turkey and Muslim India as much as he; quotations from his work and allusions to its most famous verses are found everywhere; for centuries, commentaries have been written on his compositions, and they have been translated into the various Islamic languages.

In the Subcontinent the tradition of music and dance was mainly connected with the Chistiya order which had been implanted in Indian soil by Mu'inuddîn Chishti (d. 1236 in Ajmer), one of the most influential personalities of medieval India. It is small wonder therefore that his later disciple in the Deccan, Gîsûdarâz (d. 1421), rather frequently uses dance symbols in his Persian poetry. Soon these allusions were popular with all poets, mystics and non-mystics alike, and it is no difficult task to discover numerous places in Indo-Persian poetry during the 16th and 17th centuries which praise the enthusiastic dance. Thus "Urîf says, in moth-and-candle imagery:

He dances in his own fire—
that is how a moth should be.

Some other poet dances

like mad, longing for the stones of the children.

Or else he admits his utter wilderness like Kalim who sings:

I have fallen into this sea because of bewilderment—
my boat begins to dance wherever it sees a whirlpool

Ghalib is only one in the long line of poets who have sung of the enthusiasm of dancing in East and West, although he is definitely not a romantic 'dancing with the daffodils' but rather a poet who would have felt closer to the exuberant Dancing Songs of Nietzsche, if one should look for western parallels to his attitude.

Our poem is written in the meter mu'dârî:

a meter which seems to the Western ear much too heavy and irregular for the light movement that it is supposed to convey. Rûmî's dancing poems are generally composed in smoother meters, often with a hint in the middle of each hemistich, so as to underscore the beating of the foot and the clapping of the hands in the whirling movement.

Ghalib's poem ends with the rhyme word be-raqî, 'dance!' preceded by a long a. Its very first verse is of striking beauty and of quite novel imagery. To repeat it once more:

Like the reflection of the bridge in the torrent dance in the delight of affliction!
Keep your place firmly, and yet dance. separated from yourself!
The metaphors are not common—the bridge had been used in classical Persian tradition in general as a symbol of this world, as it was introduced by the early Arabic ascetics who relied upon an alleged Prophetic tradition. 9Atṭār compares the world to a bridge, or to a castle on a bridge,41 and earlier a poet like Khāqānī had used the same metaphor:

Life is a bridge with a breach in it: the events are the torrent which breaks the bridge—

Strive that you may pass over the cracked bridge before the torrent comes.45

Rāmī uses the image of the bridge for death which leads to the shores of the other world.46 But the idea of the torrent which shakes, undermines, and eventually destroys the bridge of life is already found in 9Atṭār's lyrics. From here Ghālib's imagery is derived through the numerous other poets who had written verses about the association of bridge and torrent, among them Naṣīrī (d. 1612) whose example Ghālib follows to a certain extent in this ghazal.47 Kalīm (d. 1645) admonishes the reader that in the way of 'world-burning love' neither king nor beggar is safe; for

The order of the torrent goes over ruins and inhabited land.

Drī ro ʿuszq jhān-su-z-e shā-e jāmaka-
Hakam silāb biwār-e wālād rūd

He thus uses a combination of images which were inherited in turn by Ghālib. Būdīl (d. 1721) associates the movement of water with dance as well:

For the wave of the ocean, trembling is the dance of the joy of living—

or:
The fever of longing for someone keeps the pulse of the sea at a dancing.48

Ghālib is very fond of the combination of dance—breaking—torrent. He has expressed one and the same idea in a Persian and an Urdu verse (as he has done several times over):

You would think, the building of my house delights in being destroyed, for its walls are engaged in dance owing to the constant coming of the torrent

بنا حالام ام خذ عاشق داست پنداری-
کر آمد آل سیلاب در رقصت دیوار

which he varies in the Urdu poem with the rhyme dar-ā diwār:

Do not ask how one is bereft of one's senses in the pleasure of the torrent's arrival—:
door and wall are dancing from top to bottom.49

The joy of being destroyed is one of the main topics of classical Persian poetry. It is the yearning for fanā, annihilation, as the mystics say; for by annihilation a new and everlasting life is acquired. Kalīm expresses this very idea with the imagery of the devastated wall which so to speak, 'dies before dying' (the Prophet is related to have taught his followers: 'Die before ye die', a ḥādīth which forms part of the basic vocabulary of Islamic mysticism):

The downfall of the old is its regeneration:

No one but death is necessary for my reconstruction.50

اُتادن دیوار کچن نو شدند امکت
جیز مرگ کسی دریا آبادی سن نیست

In harmony with Kalīm's verse, the poets of the late 17th and early 18th centuries would prefer to use for this state the word shikast, i.e., the 'breaking' of one's self in order to be rescued from this world and its deceiving manifestations.51 Did not Ghālib say in an Urdu line whose meaning seems to me, less negative as one would expect:

I am the sound of my own breaking

سی هیک اپنی شکست کی آواز

an expression which is repeated almost verbatim in his Persian poetry?

ديکر یاس یتیمنی ما وما سمجید
آوازی از کسی تار خودم ما
It was Hāfiz who—following Sa'di's example—had sung in a famous line:

*It behoves to go under the sword of His grief in dancing,
for he who has been killed by Him finds a good end.*

This idea of longing for the delight of pain and affliction, the *dhāwa-i bāla*', forms one of the central subjects in Ghalib's poetry—full many a time has he dwelt upon the rose garden which looks to him, like wounds

تیر مخصر خشم رقص کانان باید رفت
کان که شد کشتی او نیک سر انجام انتاد

or reminds him of the promise of his beloved to slay him

وعده سیر کسان که خونت با طالع شوق
موده کهل پنجره ها جو مسکور نشیب

The lovers are in his poetry, 'greedy for the savouriness of molestations'

وا حسرتا که باران کهنه چست ست هائی
هم کو حرصی چند آزار دیکه کر

and, have slowly turned completely into pain.

و م لونکت رفت رنگی سرنا پی ام خونیت

Here he remains quite faithful to the tradition of mystical poetry in both the classical languages and the folk literatures throughout the Islamic world, though he as an ingenious poet, sings of this pain in more colourful images and adds some new variants to the old story. He thus may compare the thorns on which small bits of his torn liver are impaled to bushes on which red flowers bloom.

لغت جمر سه ذکر مرطر شاخ گل
تا چند باغلان، مرحبا، کر کر گلن

The idea of delighting in suffering is also very well expressed in a Persian verse of his, where he speaks of Farhād, the unlucky lover who

after being cheated by the king, killed himself with the axe he had used to forge a canal through the rocks:*

*I tremble in blood with envy and dance with delight due to the axe which trembles in the hand of Farhād.*

(Another of Ghalib's favourite words, that is *rashq*, 'envy, jealousy', appears in this same verse.)

This constant dwelling upon the cruelty of the beloved and the pleasure the poet seems to take in his suffering is at times an agonizing ordeal for the Western reader; but one should always remember the wonderful verse in Ghalib's Urdu *divān* which has summarized the philosophy of pain and suffering:

*When pain surpasses its limits, it becomes a remedy (in itself).*

**درد کا حد یہ گزر ہے، سے ہوا ہو جانا.**

However, it seems to me that Ghalib's introductory verse of the dancing-ghazal contains more than the usual longing for the delight in pain. It also alludes to a polarity which is characteristic of the poet's world-view. The representatives of Islamic theology, and especially the mystics, have always highlighted the contrast of God's *jamāl*, Beauty, and *jālāl*, Tremendous Power and Majesty, as the two poles of life which are crowned by *kamāl*, Absolute Perfection. They have seen in the contrasting mystical states which alternate in the mystic's spiritual pilgrimage the movement which leads eventually into unity. The words of the Muslim creed with their stark juxtaposition of the negation *la* (ْا) —'There is no deity'—and the affirmation *Allāh* (اَللَّهُ) 'but Allah'—play an important role not only in religious life but also in poetical language. Outside the mystical sphere, one of the favourite devices of classical Persian poetry is to juxtapose two contradictory nouns, or adjectives, or whole clauses in one verse. Ghalib has made use of this rhetoric device very often; in his *qaṣīda* on Divine Unity which is_modelled after *Urfi's tawḥīd*, he has elaborated his ideas concerning this Divine Unity which reveals itself in contradictory manifestations.

It thus seems that sharply contrasting elements enthralled him all the more since he himself was not a straightlined character but bore many contradictory characteristics in himself:
The heart an ocean of weeping, and the mouth went to smile.

Apart from its simple meaning, this Urdu verse contains a fine pun on the word āzhna which means both 'accustomed to' and 'swimming,' thus furnishing a rhetorical association with 'ocean.'

In this connection it is highly interesting to read Ghalib's horoscope as he has rendered it in his eulogy to ʿAlī ibn Ṭalib. There he shows which contrasting influences have ruled his life:

Call it not an astronomical table, for it is a manuscript full of infirmities.
Call it not an astronomical table, for it is a thing that comprises opposites...

The fact that both Jupiter, the 'Greatest Fortune,' and Mars, the 'Smaller Misfortune,' are located in the sign of Pisces convinces Ghalib that not only the guarantee for integrity but likewise the guide of corruption dominate his life, and that not alone the flood of Noah but the fatal storm (qargar) which decimated the People of ʿAd are depicted in the signs of his stars.86 Harshness and 'strange tenderness' are detected by the poet in his horoscope, and those contradictory characteristics which made life sometimes so difficult for him are, in his opinion, imbedded into his soul from the moment of his birth.

His life was not governed by a single mood or, by one attitude in spite of his occasionally stubborn behaviour in practical life, spiritually he was trembling like a dewdrop on the thorn, moved by each sunbeam.

learning by the sun's gracious view the secret of annihilation.

This supersensitivity, the 'watery' element, makes him the author of verses which appeal to everyone in every mood, as Ghalib seems to utter what the reader has always felt.

This element of instability is reflected in many of his poems. To be sure, the 'picture on the water' had long since been a fixed image for passing away, and especially the poems by the 18th century mystic Mir Dard contain many allusions to this 'picture' or 'print' on water, an image which Western poetry uses as well.87 Here lies the source for Ghalib's 'reflection of the bridge on the surface of the water,' an ingenious elaboration of earlier motifs.

In other poems Ghalib has described his changing mood in images of the garden. Perhaps the most gracefully flowing lines are those from a Persian qaṣida where he says:

At times I roamed through the deserts like a madman,
at times I went, intoxicated, to the promenade of the rosegarden,
at times, I choose, like the nightingale, the garden-wall's crest,
at times I went into the firework due to the mothlike state of my heart.

Like the moth he seeks annihilation in the flame, but his flames are a whole ẓāhirāt, a firework in which spectators may delight. The dance of the reflection of the bridge on the surface of the gushing waters which will eventually undermine and destroy this very bridge, indicates the same end. The dance of the sparks of the firework which annihilates the moth, fascinates the poet as much as the constantly changing movement of his shadow on the floods that threaten his very existence. Ghalib, however, remains steadfast and firm despite this dread of the coming flood—be the torrent a symbol of his attacks of psychological stress or be it an allusion to the political and social situation in India during the 19th century.

The second verse plays less ingeniously, with a traditional idea of Persian poets, namely, that the beautiful beloved is utterly faithless and never keeps his (or her) promise. One should not desire more than the present moment's bliss (such as the teaching of ʿUmar Khayyām),
without expecting longstanding loyalty. Alone the lover should boast of his loyalty and proudly dance.

*Time (or: the covenant) has no loyalty; the single moment is a fair booty—dance in the blanishment of the loyal covenant from the beautiful ones.

This rather conventional, but nevertheless elegant, verse is followed by one of those lines which clearly illustrate why Muhammad Iqbal, the poet of restless movement and advocate of dynamism and continuing development, was so fond of Ghalib’s poetry:

*Constant seeking is delight—what do you talk of getting over the way?

*Give up walking—dance to the sound of the caravan-bell!

The idea of Ghalib’s wayfarer is not the regular straight-forwarded pace, like that of the camel which walks steadily through the desert in the hope of soon reaching its goal, but rather a restless ‘dance’ which cares only for the movement itself, not for the destination.

The image of the caravan-bell—known to the modern reader from the title of Iqbal’s first collection of Urdu poetry, Bâng-i darâ, ‘Sound of the Caravan bell’, if not from Richard Burton’s famous ‘Kasidâh’ called ‘The Tinkling of the Camel-bell’—is as old as Eastern poetry itself, the journey of the caravan being a central topic of Arabic and Persian poetry. Mystics and non-mystics have described the bell which awakens the traveller in the caravan from the short sleep—the ‘sleep of heedlessness’, as the Sufis would say. Or else they have listened to the sound of the bell which announces the arrival of the expected caravan in town, as Sa’di says:

*My ear is the whole day on the road because I wait for you, and my eye is on the threshold, and when the call of the mu’addhin comes, I think it is the bell of the caravan.*

As so often it was Hâfiz who created the two verses that subsequently became models for later poets: in the first ghazal of his divâns we hear the complaint that the lover finds no rest in the halting place as the bell

*summons him for departure from one moment to the next; in a later poem we become acquainted with the idea that

*No one knows where the halting-place of the beloved is: only that much is clear that a sound of the bell comes (from somewhere)*

*کسی نداست کہ منزلتہ محشوق کچھ کجاست
این تدر تر کہ بانگ کھیس سی آید

The image of the caravan-bell is very often found in Jâmi’s (d. 1492) poetry when he plays with the different aspects of bell and sound. A poet like Fadlî might excuse himself for making noise since he is a bell leading the caravan, or, again in the same strain, attest that he who has reached union will no longer ask Why and How, for

*When the way is finished the bell has no longer a tongue.*

*چون تو تمام گشت جریش یہ زبان شد (کلیم)

Others might claim that they had become mute and speechless from weeping since

*the bell does not produce any sounds when it is immersed in water,*

*پاز ایستد زناله چو باشند جریش در آب

or perhaps they might complain full of envy that the sound of the bell reaches the beloved earlier than the lover who rides with the caravan.

In short, the caravanbell is a common expression with Persian and Indo-Persian poets, which was immediately adopted by Urdu writers as is clearly shown in the poems of Mir Dard and Mir.

The association between the bell and the dance which appears in Ghalib’s verse is similarly prefigured in classical models: Jâmi speaks of the camel dancing on the mughlân, the ‘Arabian thorn’, at the sound of a bell that tells him of the Ka’ba of Union. *Urfi uses a similar imagery, whereas his contemporary Faydî speaks of his own caravan in which

*neither the dance of the bell nor the sound of the caravan-bell...

*رضي جریش و بانگ کھیس دیا لکنایم

is to be found. This image was imitated by Ghalib when he describes, in almost the same words, the ahl-i fanâ’, those who have reached annihilation, as
a caravan without the highway's dust or the peals of the caravan-bell

Jhângâr's court-poet Tâhâ-i Âmuli, in turn, desires to 'set the howdah a-dance' when he himself is bound at the feet of the camel instead of a bell.66 and Naqîrî mentions how the sound of the caravan-bell induces him to ecstasy and samâ.67 Ghalîb himself occasionally alludes to the complaint or the sonorosity of the bell which, in his poetry, is associated with the motif of roving about aimlessly in the wilderness when yearning drives the lover deeper and deeper into the desert and over the mountain ranges:

Why do you ask how long the journey of longing is?
For in this way
the sound of our bell has dropped down like dust.

And in his Qâshâda on Divine Unity he has spoken of those who measure the path of God and who have, in their endless quest
cast the nine spheres like the bell at the necks
of the camels of the caravan...

an impressive hyperbola which fits into his general praise of longing and into his descriptions of the never ending road.68

The following verse expresses once more the polarity which is closely connected with the dancing motif:

We have been thriving and have walked gracefully in the meadows—
O flame, dance in melting our straw and our thorns!
The flowers and greenery of the garden and meadows, fresh and lively as they were in spring, will one day wither. Nevertheless, one thing is left for them, i.e., to gain new value by being burnt.

Since Ghalîb’s fire-imagery forms the core of his poetry we will devote a special chapter to it.

After having alluded to his favourite subject, that of the dance of the sparks, Ghalîb now turns to another classical symbolism when he sings:

Take the way of the mystical dance (samâ) to the melody of the owl, and dance likewise in the passion (or: air) of the trembling of the Kingbird’s wing (humâ)!

It may well sound strange that he urges that the mystical whirling dance be performed at the shriek of the owl, which is usually regarded as a bird of ill omen, inhabiting ruins and associated with places of desolation and times of calamity—all the more so since the next hemistich introduces Ghalîb’s favourite bird, the Humâ, a bird of happy omen which prognosticates a crown to every head it overshades.71

However, the combination of these two birds is already found in earlier poetry. According to ʿAttâr, the owl worships gold (which is understood from its residing in ruins, the hidingplace of treasures), whereas the Humâ is modest and content.72 Khâqâni, the outstanding panegyrist in 12th century western Iran, says:

The bird whom you call Humâ
is an owl which has sprung from my nest
mergi khe trâsi hamâ hovâni
jadar kiz krân i anâ i ma jist
i.e., it is only a low product of his thoughts, but people are unaware of its origin and consider it precious, though the poet could produce much more wonderful things. ʿUrî associated the owl with poverty in contrast to the royal bird, or else with grief;73 Kallim expressed the thought that

In the country of love where the owl has the splendour of the Kingbird (Humâ)—
that head which does not see its edification from the torrent has gained a bad omen.

Love sees only one thing everywhere, regardless of owl and Humâ; its goal is new life through annihilation—it is the same imagery as used by Ghalîb in his ghâzal: the torrent, destroying the firmly entrenched walls and bridges which rejoice in their devastation, corresponds to the owl, a bird of evil omen haunting places of ruins which nevertheless becomes in the eyes of the lover a symbol for the treasures found when the ravaged castle has been unearthed. Even the idea that the lover should

dance to the song of the owl in the ruins
can be found in the ravishing dancing-poem by ʿUrî which begins:

Say 'Idol' and dance in the idol-temple...

Cam miskarî wa dar yâthâna kharâṣ
Nawâ mihrâ wa sâsâna kharâṣ
The expression *raqs-i bismil*, the 'dance of the just slaughtered bird', which means the fluttering of the poor lover's heart, is another instance of an association of 'dance' with suffering and death; Indo-Persian poets have lovingly used this term throughout the centuries.

Indeed, bird-symbolism as used by Ghâlib in this verse was always very popular in Persian poetry. In many primitive and ancient societies the bird had been the symbol of the soul which spreads its wings heavenward, even today one can hear Turks say *can kuşu uyu*, 'his soul-bird has flown away', when they speak of somebody's death. In Persian poetry it is mainly the nightingale which was chosen as symbol of the soul in its longing for the eternal Beauty of the red rose, the manifestation of Divine Beauty and Majesty, the flower created from the perspiration of the Prophet. Or the soul-bird may be the falcon who awaits the melody of the drum of the Lord which will call him to leave his earthly cage and to return to the fist of his Divine Master. We may also think of Sanâ’î’s charming 'Rosary of the Birds', a longish qaṣida in which he interprets the way the various birds praise God—verses which deeply influenced Jalâluddin Rûmî. Half a century after Sanâ’î Abûl Ghâlib relates in his *Manṭiq uthâir* the story of the thirty birds who wander in search of the Simurgh, traversing the valleys of longing, poverty etc. and undergoing many trials and tribulations until they finally find the Divine bird; then they realize their essential unity with him: the thirty birds, *si mûrg*, are none other than the Simurgh himself. Thereafter, Persian bird-symbolism relied to a large extent upon Abûl Ghâlib’s characteristics of the individual birds.

Ghâlib does not employ the combination rose-nightingale as often as some other poets do. He speaks of the pheasant's graceful gait and compares it to a dance;

> تا سرو نازج سبید و گل پرخن دارد
> رنگ از تندو جست و سرود از هزارهاد

but he is especially fond of three other birds: the peacock, the parrot, and the Humâ. The first two are typical Indian birds which earlier Persian poetry generally associated with the Subcontinent. The peacock is, according to tradition, a glorious bird that once lived in Paradise. To the multi-coloured peacock, Persian poetry occasionally attributes the capacity of dancing—he dances, enthralled by his own beauty (unless he looks down at his ugly feet which mortify him with shame). Ghâlib invents a rather weird image in this connection: he sees the flask fluttering like freshly slaughtered peacocks because it is so delighted when beholding the cupbearer’s graceful approach.

> مَسْحَرُوا چو تاب دوش آرفُر رفَتَر
> سرماخی را چو طاوان بس پَر قُنث دارد

The unusual comparison rests upon the movement of the reddish wine in a vessel most likely enamelled or gilt.

As to the parrot, the 'sugar-chewing bird', it is connected in Persian poetry with the sweet talking poet; that is why Amir Khusraw was called the *fâr-ye Hind*, the "Parrot of India," a name which Ghâlib thought not too suitable for himself, as we saw in the beginning although he once claims to be a *pâmhre* which bears parrots instead of dates

> نَخَلُ كَه هم نَهَي رَبّ طَوْلِي آوْرَم

The parrot's colour is green like that of unripe dates. This auspicious hue reminded pious souls of the birds in Paradise which, according to the tradition, are green; green being the colour of Paradise and of highest bliss. In a verse similar to that of the slaughtered peacock Ghâlib might even compare the meadow on which his coquetish beloved struts to a freshly slaughtered parrot, dying under her feet in joyful convulsions...

> یتی دارم که کویگ کر بروی سپید برف ریم
> زین جوان طولان بسیل بید ازدوق وتاریم

Or the verdigris on his mirror might be considered by his jealous beloved, the reflection of a parrot.

> کیا پد گمان چنگی که آنیت سپید
> طولانی که عکس سپیده به زنگار دیگه کر

Since these birds are taught to speak by means of a mirror, the combination parrot-mirror is rather frequently found in Persian and Urdu poetry, particularly with the mystics. By the way, the symbolism of mirrors belongs to the outstanding features of Ghâlib's poetry.
Ghalib's favourite bird, the Humā, is a strange mythical animal, particularly noted for two characteristics: its shadow needs only fall upon a man to transform him into a king, and its food consists of dry bones. For this latter reason the Humā is regarded by some mystical poets as a symbol of contentment. "Aftār lets him speak for himself like a true Šūrī:

I give bones to the dog of my lower instincts, and thus I give the spirit peace from that dog.
Since I gave always bones to my lower soul my soul had consequently found this lofty rank.

And Nāṣīr ʿAlī Sīrhdī (d. 1697), whose poetry Ghalib admired in his youth, elaborates this idea in a well-known verse:

The noble gets no share from his own wealth — How could the Humā sit under his own shadow ⁹⁰?

How could the Humā sit under his own shadow?

Other poets like to describe how the Humā tried to pick at their dry bones. ⁹¹ This is an aspect of the image, which Ghalib highlights. He may think that his bones do not beset the ascetic bird:

Keep far away from the crumbs of my bones, o Humā, for this is the table of invitation for fire-eating birds.

Even his dead bones are still so full of fire that the King-bird will not be able to devour, let alone to digest them. On the other hand, Ghalib hopes that the Humā's beak will peck at his bones after his death, as this sound and feeling would remind him of that time in his life when the eyelashes of his beloved were still prickling his heart:

He also compares himself to the Humā in a daring image which, like the first one, is associated with his fire-symbolism:

We are the Humā of hot-racing flight; do not expect grace from us! Our shadow, like smoke, rises upwards from our wing.

Ghalib's flight is so swift, so 'hot' that his shadow soars upward like smoke without touching anyone on earth. (In another similar passage which, however, bears no relation to the Humā, Ghalib describes his running through the desert where 'his shadow trembles like smoke'). The following lines exemplify this same style of phantastic exaggeration:

The humiliation which appears in the way of love—write it down with the ink of the shadow of the Humā's wing

For any humiliation and distress imparted to the lover by his love will be regarded by him as even more precious than the kingly rank conferred by the shadow of the Humā.—Ghalib expresses a similar idea in a very unusual metaphor in a Persian mātā where he once more dwells upon the delight in suffering:

The brain of those who aim at annihilation enjoys affliction—On top of my head, the saw is ascending like the Humā's wing.

That means: the saw which will split his head (as it happened, according to Muslim legends, to the Prophet Zakariyā) is, in the poet's eyes, instrumental in granting him the high rank of annihilation: affliction and martyrdom are more valuable than worldly wealth and happiness, than kingdom and power.

Ghalib's comparisons with the Humā are quite variable; thus he can see the (blackish) hyacinth growing under the shadow of the Humā in spring.

He may think that his bones do not beset the ascetic bird:
Or he may compare the fresh young grass to the shade of the Kingbird because it grants the earth new strength and beauty

He uses the word rather frequently in his panegyrics, comparing himself to the Kingbird who flies over his object of praise (Mustafa Khan, Q LX) or associating the spear of his patron with the Humā's beak which picks at the bones of the enemies (Q LIII). But essentially, even the royal bird is too mean a prey for him; although it has come into his snare several times, it sends it away and searches for the Anqâ, the bird of Non-existence which can never be found...

An association of owl and Humā as in our dancing-poem occurs in other poems as well;

The shadow of the owl corresponds with the 'evening of affliction':

Ghâlib now and then refers to himself as a nightingale. In the very first ghazal of his Persian divân he asks the Almighty to grant him Paradise: would it not be agreeable for God to have such a nightingale with lovely new melodies in that garden? However, he similarly and quite logically expresses his despair and hopelessness in symbols drawn from the realm of birds. Utterly helpless in this prison of life he no longer feels the passing of the seasons, he no more descries the sight of roses:

and:

This is the likeness of my striving:
like the imprisoned bird which gathers straw for his nest...

Ghâlib really correct to describe Ghâlib's poetry with the words:

Now you understand how far the reach of the bird of imagination is!

To sum up the verse upon which we first commented: man should seize every opportunity to surrender to the music of life, whether the melody be that of sadness and destruction as brought forth by the owl, or the song of happiness as is heard from the movement of the wings of the Humâ. Both modes belong together and are as inseparable as life and death, as annihilation and eternal duration, as symbolized in dance. Exactly the same feeling is expressed in the Urdu line:

If it is not the melody of joy, let it be the melody of mourning.

Let us enjoy every sound of life, for:

The instrument of life will be silent one day...

Consequently, the poet continues his thought in our ghazal with the seventh verse:

Leave aside the decayed pictures of the dear friends —
Dance to the trumpet of mourning and at the banquet of condolence!

There is nothing to be gained from constant lamenting and indulging in the memories of past happiness, although Ghâlib speaks in many a passage of those who have been consigned to the dust, and of whom
only a few have reappeared, in the shapes of roses and tulips as ideas expressed by Persian poets since at least ʿUmar Khayyām.

Between the two verses which sing of ‘dancing’ even in moments of despair, ʿAlībīl inserts another verse about the eternal movement of love and timeless expansion of the lovers:

In love, spreading out (in cheer) does not reach an end —
Become like a whirlwind of dust and dance in the air!

Love extends the faculties of man, widens his heart—the word ʿinbād which the poet has chosen is derived from the Arabic root ʿbāṣ which expresses in the language of the mystics the joyful state of opening one’s heart as contrasted to ʿaqīd, the feeling of dejection and of spiritual depression, of ‘dryness’; it is relaxation, all-embracing happiness, and may even expand into a sort of cosmic consciousness. We may interpret the above verse in a purely verbal sense: the heavy clay of the human body will be scattered and carried by the wind into all possible directions, or else we may link it with the theories of the mystics who felt that the lover’s road knows no end. When the journey toward God ends, the journey in God begins. For the sanctuary of Love has a hundred stations, the first one being resurrection.

غائب مرو كه درين بيت الحرام عشق
محد منزلت و منزل اول قامه است

as ʿUrfī says in a touching verse. Or may we find in this verse an allusion to the fate of ʿAllāj (whose figure will become visible in the last verse of the ghazal)? For ʿAttār relates that ʿAllāj was asked, on the day of his execution: “What is love?” And he answered: “You will see it today and tomorrow, and day after tomorrow.” “And on this day they slew him, and the next day they burnt him, and on the third day they gave his ashes to the wind.” This, too, is the way of annihilation in love. ʿAlībīl often emphasizes the dynamic character of love and, even more, of longing, ʿshaq: the latter word becomes almost a coterminus with the inward movement driving man toward the infinite. He has spoken of the hot race of the lover, of his way in which the Tūbīl-tree (at the far-off limits of Paradise) is only a shady resting-place halfway

It seems typical of the poet’s attitude that the expression ʿṣargar-i ʿshaq, the ‘cold storm of longing’, occurs several times in his Urdu and Persian poetry, and is usually associated with the dust of the road. ʿAlībīl sees himself as:

the bird of longing, fallen in the snare of expectation

And in an even more original metaphor he says:

I am the she-camel of longing, and Gabriel is the singing caravan leader for me

i.e., his poetry is inspired by the angel who sings to him divine melodies and spurs him to moving in excitement and haste. As classical Arabic literature often tells, certain melodies can excite camels so that expert cameldrivers could goad their animals into incredible speed by their modulations. The same idea is repeated by Ḥamīl’s highly rhythmic ‘Cameldriver’s Song’ in the ‘Message of the East’.

In ʿAlībīl’s poetry, longing is the positive force which makes real life possible. It is longing that has given my mirror to polishing.

It is longing by which the parrot of my nature became eloquent, as he says in a lengthy passage on the power of longing in Qasīdā VI, cleverly using two of his favourite images, that of the mirror and that of the sweet-talking parrot.

The idea of the ashes and dust being carried away, after death, by the storm (again the expression ʿṣargar which our poet otherwise associates with the People of ʿAd according to Qur’ānic usage) may at first sight seem rather materialistic, but actually it is quite common among the Persian and Urdu poets and even in the verses of pure mystics like Gīśūdarāz in the 15th and Mir Dard in the 18th century.
Whichever interpretation of the verse we may choose, both are in harmony with classical models. The eighth verse of the ghazal dwells once more upon the polarity of life which this poem has so often set forth:

Like the wrath of the pious and the friendship of the hypocrites be not within yourself, but dance in the throng!

The meaning behind this verse of quite unusual imagery is, in some way, associated with that of the first verse: the pious will never nurture true wrath within themselves but will only make an outward spectacle of anger when some worthy cause demands it; the same is the case with the hypocrites whose friendship and loyalty is only an external show, but by no means innate in their hearts. Man should move about in the crowd like an exhibition of 'pious wrath' and 'hypocritical friendship', just as the shadow of the bridge would move on the water's surface: devoid of any deep concern, in a sort of tamâshâ, 'show'—to use Ghalib's expression for this kind of behaviour, as he says of 'those endowed with insight':

Whatever they see, they consider it a show (tamâshâ)

Ghalib's line may remind us of "Urâf's poem with the rhyme-word mi-raqî, 'dance constantly', where he says:

In your soul, do not mix with any but the beloved, with your body, dance with the sagacious and the madman.

This resembles the state which the Naqshbandi mystics would call khâlîwat dar anjumân: it means to be isolated even in the midst of the crowd, to act with them and still keep aloof from them, as the bridge is steadfast in itself and enjoys the sight of its reflection dancing on the waters. The metaphor used here by Ghalib is, as far as I can judge, both novel and very striking.

Then he once more employs the imagery of burning and of wind:

Do not seek pain from burning, nor joy from unfolding—recklessly dance in the arms of hot storm and morning breeze!

The heart is like a bud, dependent upon the wind if it is to bloom into a flower or else wither away, leaving no issue. But the bud should be quite unconcerned as to whether the hot desert-wind burns it or the soft morning breeze caresses it: its only care should lie in its devotion to dancing, heedless of its future lot. "The Sûfî is ibn al-waqt".

The fetters of affliction appear to the lover as a substitute for the curls of his beloved for which he has longed and which finally seem to enslave him so that he starts dancing with joy. Ghalib's rhetorical question in our ghazal, "To whom are you bound?" (that means "You are bound to this or that person whom you love") seems to tend into this same direction. But in general, the expression immediately reminds the reader of the story of Husain ibn Mansûr al-Ḥallâj, the martyr-mystic of Islam, whose impact on poetry in the countries under Persian cultural influence was so great that we have to devote a separate chapter to him.

The whole ghazal with its ten verses, and not only its isolated strands, is a highly characteristic expression of Ghalib's thought. The rhyme-word 'dance' shows the inner dynamics which are so typical of his poetry:

Roses dance on the crest of the wall in spring

or:

I dance in the delight of his face, when I see him in the street
The motif of restlessness and movement recurs again and again in his verses though often concealed behind traditional forms and behind an imagery whose twists must first be disentangled before the deeper layers of meaning can be detected. Movement, produced by longing and love is the only thing that gives meaning to life, and it will continue even after death, be it as the dance of the bits of dust in the wind, or be it as the ascension of the spirit to higher spheres. Life and death are interdependent, destruction implies construction, and even though the poet in some of his most touching verses speaks of his wish to rest and to live lonely in a corner far away from human beings,

 registrado اب ایسی چچک کر جبان کوئی نے هو
هم سخن کوئی نہ هو اور هم زبان کوئی نہ هو ...

remote from all movement, the dynamic aspects of his poetry, as expressed in the motif of dancing even at the shriek of the owl, prevail nevertheless. Dancing is the movement of everything created, be it the torrent which destroys the bridge, be it the wall that awaits the flood, be it the straw desirous of its consummation in flames.

It is certainly no mere accident that Ghalib employs the same word of 'dance' in a famous verse portraying the activity of the artist who apprehends still invisible beauty in a raw block of marble; it is he who anticipates

*the dance of the still uncreated idols of Azar*

دیسے آئکھ نا تبند دل به شمار دیا
در دل متک نبگر رقص بنان آذر

This metaphor has not been coined by Ghalib; it has been used a number of poets before him, including Mir Dard; but it seems revealing that Ghalib selects this very expression from a variety of other possible metaphors. Since ancient times, the process of moulding ideas into forms of speech had been considered analogous to that of carving an idol out of stone—an idol which is already concealed within the marble. The genuine artist is he who sees the movement of figures and words before they become visible to the world. He feels the hidden power of the sparks in the stone, and he joins forces with them by freeing them so that they may partake in the upward movement of life.

We would be tempted to see a symbol of Ghalib's own situation in the first verse of this ghazal: the foundation of the bridge was firm
FOOT NOTES

1 About Ghalib's attitude towards Indo-Persian poets, his literary fight with Gatif, and the controversy about the Burhân-e qājī see Russell-Islam, Ghalib, Life and Letters, and Arifahah C. Sayyid Gilani, Ghalib, His Life and Persian Poetry. ch. IV. Cf. also the last line of IV Nr. 21.


3 Karl Rahner, Der spielende Mensch, in: Eranos-Jahrbuch 1948 (pp. 11-37), p. 64.

4 About Totentanz see Heiler, i.e. 242 (with bibliography); Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Vol. VI 1957; Hellmut Rosenfeld, Der mittelalterliche Totentanz, 1954; Id., Der Totentanz in Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien, in: Luthenrise Moderne 5, 1954.

5 C. M. Edsman, Den dansande solen (RoB 1957), 3-37.

6 L. Gongaud, La Danse dans les églises, in: Rev. d'Histoire Ecclesia. 15/1914, pp. 2-22, 229-245.

7 The most famous example is the short story by Gottfried Keller, Tonlagen (Keilen, 1870). A similar subject is treated by N. Lesskow, Jüngstes Gericht, Leipzig 1912.


11 al-Qushairî, Ar-risala al-qushairîyâ, Bulaq 1284 h., p. 197.


15 A typical example is the story of al-Ushânî, in Abu'l-Ḥasan ad-Darâmî, Strat Abu'lu-Abdallâh ibn al-Khaṭîf aṣh-Shirazi, ed. A. Schimmel, Amsterdam 1935 Ch. VII Nr. 33.


17 Quoted by Rahner, i.e. p. 87, after Migne, PG 44/508 f.

18 G. van der Leeuw, In den Hemel is eene dans, Amsterdam 1930, German translation 1938.

19 Plato, Phaidron 250 b.; Pluton, Eunuchus III 2, 14; VI 9; for Philo see Rahner, i.e. p. 87.

20 Rahner, i.e. p. 52 after Migne, PG 25, 1465 b.

21 Grete Luers, Die Sprache der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter im Werke der Mechtild von Magdeburg, München 1926.


25 Some typical verses in Ṣâḥîb al-Dawâr ghazal Nr. 26, 149, 403, 543, 456, 548, 560; ʿarâfī band II, p. 86. — Kâhinî, too, uses the dancing motif, see Dirâvî 5, 654.

26 Sa'dî, Būsid, Ch. 3, p. 116.

27 Sa'dî, Ghazâlîyât. (Kulliyât Vol. III), p. 100 also 453; cf. the verse p. 248 where 'the name of the beloved moves both the speaker and the listener to dance.'


30 Jâlîluddin Rûmî, Rubûlîyât. Ms. Esad Efendi, Istanbul: f. 318 b 3; 318 b 4; 327 a 1; 318 a 6.


32 Mathâniw-yi mâyâfî, ed. and translated with a commentary, by R. A. Nicholson, London 1925-1940, Vol. IV 742. The closing Turkish hymn during the Kâhirî festival likewise contains the expression râhâ ǧâldâr' (The same) which is nourishment for the spirit.

33 Rubûlîyât f. 322 a 5.

34 f. f. 317 b 5; cf. f. 335 b 4.

35 Mathâniw II 1942; cf. Divâni Shamsî (Nicholson) Nr. II 11.

36 Mathâniw IV 742; cf. Rubûlîyât f. 329 b 2; the expression is frequently used by Rûmî and later Persian and Turkish poets. See also Mathâniw I 1867, I 1346 f.; III 96 ff.; Divâni Shamsî (Nicholson) Nr. XXXVI 4; Rubûlîyât f. 329 b 2. Rûmî's verses connected with dance are almost numberless. Some particularly beautiful examples are Divâni Kâhirî Nr. 2276, 2282, 2356, 2386 with the rhyme-word pâ kâfîa. The poets of the Melevi order in the Ottoman Empire have, then,
elaborated this imagery. A very interesting representative of this literature is Ghalib Dede (d. 1799 in Istanbul) whose language shows at times amazing similarity with that of our Ghalib, especially in his use of the fire imagery. About him see E. J. W. Gibb, A History of Ottoman Poetry, 6 vols., Leiden 1900-1909, Vol. IV p. 198-206.

37 Friedrich Rückert, Ghaseh: Dschelalddin Rumi, Stuttgart 1819; particularly Nr. 9-11.

38 W. Hastie, The Festival of Spring from the Divan of Jalaluddin, rendered in English Gazels after Rückert's version, Glasgow 1903: Nr. VI (translation of Rückert Nr. 11).

39 Hugo von Hofmannsthall, Sebastian Melmoth (Werke III p. 131).

40 Ghibārāz, Anis ol-Γudhmidī (lith. s.d.), p. 16.

41 *Urfo, ghazal, Kulliyāt p. 357.

But the same poet has also praised the motionless suffering of the lover in terms of mystical dance :

To surrender completely and not to quake is our sanad

۳۱۸ تَنْمَيْ مَعَ قُرْبَانِهَا سَاعَاتٍ مَّا

id. p. 316. According to some mystics the Sufi who controls himself and resists the entrapping music is superior to him who is moved by music and poetry to dance; this is the quintessence of the story of Junaid who refused Nūrī's invitation to join the dance with the Qur'ānic quotation: "You see the mountains that you supposest fixed passing by like clouds..." (Sura 27:88).

42 Bāgharzī, in: Kāshf i 141.


44 Cf. *Anīr, Divān, ghazal 28 (twice), 718.—Mir Dard, Divān-i Fārsī, Rubā'i, p. 119.

45 Khāqānī, Divān, gazdā, p. 426

عبر إلهاً، القولة ص، خادم موسى، المحسن

id. p. 102.

46 Naṣrī, Divān, ghazal 986: "The world is a torrent, the Other world a bridge". Cf. id. ghazal 242 and the very elegant expression in ghazal 354.

47 Bedil, Kulliyāt, ghazal 37, ghazal 10.

48 Cf. also IV Nr. 61:

The eye of our hut of sorrows is waiting for the torrent.

...吮َا يَتَعَفَّ شِكَّةٌ، ما به رأي سبيل است

We may add the following references to the torrent:

مَنْدُ مَثْلِ سِبْلَةِ إِنَّ كَأْنَ تَأتِي عَلَى عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ، مَنْ جَنَّةٌ سَرِيرُ عَظِيمٍ أَيْنِ تَدْنُوُنَّ تَنْهَارُ مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَالِدٌ كَأْنَ كَأْنَ فِيْتِينُ بَشَرٍ فِيَتِينُ أَمْرَانٌ ذَلِكَ سِبْلَةٌ جَرَّاهِي يَدْرِي مَدَارُ وَدَارٍ، هَكَّنَ

Typical of Ghalib's approach is the question:

To whose house will the torrent of affliction come after my death?

کس کے گھر میں اڑ بند کو سیلاب کا سوہن کا بندر

Further IV Nr. 249:

We have cleaned the abode from furniture with (the help of) the torrent.

کسناہا نے ریت سے بنائے شوہ سے اسم


The importance of metaphors for 'breaking', 'broken' is further enhanced by the well-known faḍūl qālūd "I am with those whose hearts are broken for My sake". Cf. Fīhānī, Divān, ghazal 79. The word shikast is extremely often used by Bedil. Mir Dard says in a Persian quatrains (Divān-fārsī p. 84) : "I am the slave of him who has broken himself.

Indo-Persian poets have invented the metaphor of the lock which can be opened only by breaking it (thus *Urfo, Kulliyāt, ghazal 285):

دِلْکَ سِیْلَبُ خُووْرِش مَرْحَبَ مَا دَلَّتْهُ

It is also the verse by Nāṣir "Alf Sīrīndi, Kāshf i 936; thus our being broken becomes the opening of the door of our Paradise (quoted in Muhammad Nāṣir *Andalib, Nāvayā *Andāth i 532).

A few examples from Ghalib's poetry:

The lover's instrument produces a sound when being broken.

سَمَّى فِيْتِينَ زُكَّاَتُهُ فَهَا مِنَ الْأَلْثَام

Cf. also IV Nr. 115, Nr. 135, and

۳۹۶ تَسْتَعَفَّ شِكَّةٌ، ما به رأي سبيل است


52 See Sura 41/15; 54/19; 69/9.

53 A fine example in Dard, Urdu Divān, p. 42. The expression is well known in the West, see Shakespeare, Henry VIII, 4/2.

Men's evil manners live in brass: their virtues we write in water.

Very typical of this attitude is a Persian ghazal with contrasting pairs of words:

I possess neither the wealth of this world nor the good recompense (in the other world);

I am neither powerful like Nimrod, nor patient like Khalil.

نَهِ مَا رَوَّتَ دُنِىَا نَهِ مَا أُمَرَ جَسِيل

نَهِ مَا مُرِيدُ دُنِىَا نَهِ كَحْيَا جَسِيل

Its last qaf forms a sort of prayer to that God who does such wonderful things:

O Thou who hast closed Satan's eye with the nail of predestination and hast burnt with hot breath Gabriel's wing . . . .
This poem would deserve a detailed analysis.

Some examples in “Aṭṭār’s Divān,” thus ghazal. Nr. 489. Famous is Rumi’s line (Divān-i Rūmī Nr. 304).

Our cry is like that of the bell of the caravan, or like the thunder when the clouds pass by.

O traveller, do not put your heart on any halting-place, for then, you will become fatigued in the moment of attraction.

Sa’di, Gulistān, Ch. II p. 57. Cf. Ghālib’s witty lines:

The picture of the saucy idol in the rival’s embrace—
(to paint it) Mant’s brush would need a peacock’s foot!

a clever combination of the peacock-like charm of the beloved with the ugliness of the peacock’s feet which spoil the whole picture; for can there be anything more repelling than the sight of the mirthful beloved in the rival’s arms?

Ghālib’s verse is strangely reminiscent of “Aṭṭār’s description of the peacock in the Manjī’s quatrains (MT 52) where the colourless bird is made to say:

When the Painter of the Unseen produced my picture, the fingers of the Chinese became reduced to a stump.

In Islamic tradition, the Chinese, and among them Mānī, are considered to be the true masters of painting (probably a reminiscence of the marvellously decorated Manichean manuscripts which were found in Turkestan).—Reduced to a stump: the Persian expression qalam shudan contains a pun on qalam ‘pen’, the instrument for painting.

Amir Khusrau, the ‘Parrot of India’ often uses images connecting the parrot and his homeland; but already in Khān’s quatrains (Divān qasida p. 380 and often) the relation of both parrots and elephant with India is commonplace. That holds true also for “Aṭṭār’s poetry (see Divān, qasida 667).—Fouchécour has shown that the parrot or parakeet was rather frequently mentioned by the earliest Persian lyric poets, and that Manuchehri (d. 1040) has alluded to India as its original country where the bird speaks Hindi. (Fouchécour, I.e. p. 143.)

Ghālib often uses the word, thus in IV Nr. 16, 119, 171; the reflection of a parrot looks like verdigris in the mirror of a luckless person:

in Arānī’s mā’lqārāt, we find a richly bled with negār mānd

Cf. also IV Nr. 5, and Qasida XLI. I, further U 141, and 106: everything in the six directions is a mirror for the parrot:

is a refuge when facing He, Alī

Cf. also Khusrau’s qasida 229; cf. the verse of Khān (Divān Nr. 204) who says sarcastically:

The Sky keeps the means and power for the ignoble. If the Humā’s has a shadow, he has it only for bones.

Cf. also I. Schimmel, Der Steinweg im islamischen Volkslied, in: Globus 1903/ p. 301 ff.—Cf. also A. Schimmel, Die Bildersprache Descheladad Rantis, Walldorf 1949, pp. 33–37. A fine example of this symbolism is Rumi, Mathnawī II 3749 ff.


Sanā’î, Divān, ed. M. Rīzāvī, the long quasida called isṭadhī al-ṣuyūr, p. 29 ff.

Amir Khusrau, Divān, ghazal Nr. 1410: the intoxicated beloved is comparable to a peacock who just came from Paradise.

The association of the peacock with India, and India with Paradise, since it

possesses two serpents and peacocks, has been elaborated by Amir Khusrau as well as by later poets in India and Iran.—Faiqī speaks of the ‘peacock of desire’ which struts elegantly, AP p. 180.

Sa’dī, Gulistān, Ch. II p. 57. Ghalib’s witty lines:

The picture of the saucy idol in the rival’s embrace—
(to paint it) Mant’s brush would need a peacock’s foot!

ناهک نازحیت طالب به آندور رود

apās ṣard hū b-e ṣāhā tāmān māne

in Arānī’s mā’lqārāt, we find a richly bled with negār mānd

Cf. also Khusrau’s qasida 229; cf. the verse of Khān (Divān Nr. 204) who says sarcastically:

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The association of the peacock with India, and India with Paradise, since it
More Humā birds are found in IV Nr. 99, where even a humā-yi bismil is mentioned; IV Nr. 174, 280:
I have neither a kingbird's shadow nor a dog's nature—
I do not want a morsel from bones.

Further: Q LXIV: the shadow of the Humā: IV Nr. 66, Abri-i goharbār, Hamd; other uses of the word: Q XXII; Q LVIII; IV Nr. 116, Nr. 193; tarkib-band II, etc.

The contrast Humā and crow also in "Amīr Khura, Divān Nr. 1623; Rōmī, Divān-i khātrī Nr. 2258, 2158 Humā and owl; "Urā, Kulliyāt, ghazal 317, 343; Kalīm, Divān, ghazal Nr. 37;—Mir Dard says in praise of fagār 'poverty', that the Humā is, in his own eyes, a crow.
Divān-i Fārst, p. 106.

Similar statement:

قى نهای غم کربری ای دل غنیست جانی
دل دی و راام بی یی ترمکیمنم که آخر
نّه گری، بسی یه اه نم چش

Cf. Mir Dard, Divān-i Fārst, p. 95:
One must give hospitality to pain and distress.
One must keep one's heart and will cultivated through grief.
The opportunity is given gratuitously, o you who are negligent of existence:
If it is not a joyful occasion (or: wedding), one must arrange a gathering for mourning.

Cf. A. Bausani, The Position of Ghālib in the History of Urdu and Indo-Persian Poetry, in: Der Islam 34/1959, where he comments upon the famous ghazal Sab kāhān U 90.—Cf. also Mir Dard, Urdu Divān, p. 67, about the treasure-house under the dust, e.g. the numberless beautiful people who have turned into dust and ashes.

A hyperbole which immediately reminds the reader of the last mentioned verse though in a completely different setting, is found at the end of the first nāvā 'lamentation' written in honor of the martyred members of Muḥammad's family.
It is a verse in which Ghālib praises himself with the words:

My speech has induced the angelic beings into samā'.

In the mourning-epigram I have become the pomegranate of Mustafā.

Cf. H. Rätter, Das Meer der Seele, Leiden 1955, p. 30 (according to "Aţjār's Muṣibārdāmā), and p. 635.


Cf. Khusānī, Divān, qalīṣa p. 290: the Sidrā-tree is not his ultimate goal.

Cf. IV Nr. 204: his dust after death is carried by the qarṣār:

بند مردن شکار دو چرخ سر چرخ
id. Nr. 26: resurrection will be nothing but a qarṣār:
کف خاک کن ایها بر نخست چرخ فیروز آرین بزرگ و قدری قم، نبوده تری حکاکان! 

IV. Nr. 329:

The scent of roses and dew do not befit our ha—
Oh cold storm, where did you go? Oh torrent, where are you?
A DANCE OF SPARKS

THE IMAGERY OF FIRE IN GHÂLÎB’S POETRY

Ghâlîb’s Dancing-poem alludes in its fourth verse to the straw that will dance with the fire, and thus contains an image which is central to our poet. In Ghâlîb’s imagery straw and thorns belong to the furnace; it is their privilege to kindle the fire and enhance its splendour and heat.

فنا کس سوگوب گر سکناد به اینی حقیقت کا
فروغ طالع خانگاک ہے سُقوف گلخن پر

That is why he could compare himself, being separated from those who could appreciate him and his art, to the ‘straw that is not in the furnace’.

Through مین ہیں گند یہاں گاہب کہ ہو ہو نہیں ہو غربت ہے قدر
سے تکلیف دو مسکت شش کہ گلخن سے نہیں

But he could likewise sigh from within the prison:

Woe to this abode in which one can find no air except the hot storm that burns the straw and thorns of the desert.

آم ازین خانہ گھو مہ گریز و تناوان ہوا
جس سوگوب کہ چسی کے خار بیابان سوید

In consuming the bits of straw the fire sparkles forth a radiance of happiness and dances in spasms of joy, and the straw itself dances as well, just as our poet said in his Qasîda on God’s Unity:

The dance of the straw is compared, here, to the movement of yellow saffron powder which was apparently put into the wine in order to enhance its flavour, as already mentioned in a poem by Urfî,2 the colour comparison—yellow into red—is quite correct. In most cases, however, Ghâlîb speaks not of the dance of straw but of the ‘dance of the flame’ or the ‘dance of the spark’. One of his most quoted lines is:

The lust of the banquet lasts as long as a dance of sparks

گرمی برم ہے الک رقص شرر ہوئے تک

That means, it ends immediately, for sparks live only a single moment, as our poet has stressed in a late Persian verse:

I am the sparks of love’s radiant fire, so that the moment of my birth and my death are one—tâhâ nâ hâ yâ hâ!

شرر آتش رخشیدہ یہکم کہ یکی است
دم سیلاد و واقع متن تناها یا هو

Ghâlîb has repeated the image of the raqâs-i sharar, the ‘dance of the sparks’, in his qaṣîdas by boasting:

When I give a sign of my steadfastness to the fire of the heart,
I bring forth the dance of sparks from the nature of dust.

تمکین خود برآتش دل گنگ نلدہم
رقص شرر ز طبیعہ امکار بر آورم

His heart, though of dust, will loosen sparks as if it were a piece of flint that has been struck by some other stone. For Ghâlîb often associates in the classical tradition the sparks with the flint stones in which they lie concealed.

Blood would have gushed forth from the vein of the stone,
not to be stopped,

If what you know as sorrow were a spark of fire.

درک سنجیم یکی تکنک ہو یہہ کہ بھر نہ تنتا
جب غم سنجیم ہو یہ اگر شرار ہوتا

Such sparks also leap from the axe of Farhâd, the unlucky lover who tried to hew through the rocks a passageway for a canal for milk and thus became a model for the staunch but lost labour of love.

بیدین سوزم رواجی نستہ، ہے فرہادا نازم
کہ از تاب شرار تینہ گرست بازاریش
The different aspects of love and jealousy again reveal themselves, to Ghālib, as fiery sparks, and

\[ I \text{ pour sparks into the shirt of the rose when I describe your face;} \]
\[ I \text{ am the fire of jealousy, fallen into the breast of spring.} \]

Ризم از وصف رخت گل یک شرودر بیره
آتش شکم، به چنار توهان افزاده ام.

This fine combination of the red cheek, the red rose, and the red spark is, in its colouring, very typical of Ghālib's imagery. In a similar combination of roses and sparks, which is somewhat more obscure to the Western reader, the poet says:

\[ \text{Even after his death the madman remains the goal of the visit of children;} \]
\[ \text{the sparks of the stones have shed roses over my tomb.} \]

به از مردن بیست یوبی زیارت که طلا که
شراو سنکت چکتی ه بر سری، گل تشان کی

The lunatic—a prime target for stone-throwing children—is a standing figure in Indo-Persian poetry; Ghālib's Urdu verse about this subject has become almost proverbial:

\[ I, \text{ too, threw stones at Majnun (the demented lover) in my childhood until I thought of my own head...} \]

ہے سنکت انیا تیا، کہ سردی آیا

In the above-mentioned verse, he connects the idea with roses which (as can be seen in many Indo-Muslim places of pilgrimage) are laid in tribute upon the tomb of the saints, overspreading the sarcophagus in thick layers; with these roses he equates the sparks that leap from the stones flung at him by children after his death.\(^3\)

Another use of the connection 'straw-flame' is found in an expression which sounds strange if not repelling to a Western ear: it is 'the straw of the voice's flame' which occurs sometimes in Ghālib's verses.\(^4\) But the connection of the candle and its 'tongue', e.g., its wick, with speech is rather common in the Indo-Persian tradition. The extinguished candle is 'silent', and the 'candle of talk' can become more radiant by 'adding straw to the flame of speech', i.e., giving it more fuel for speaking. Ghālib dwells on the 'voice's flame' in a number of

his verses and may even fear that he has waxed so hot in his melodies that he has become 'the roast of his voice's flame', a rather weird idea indeed!

Quite contrary to Ghālib's use of the straw-and-flame\(^5\) image was the usual association with 'straw-and-torrent' as employed by classical imagery: the torrent seizes everything in his way and sets the straw and all kinds of sprigs and rubbish to dancing on the foam. Kalim, one of the great masters of 17th century India, cleverly combines both motifs in a verse which is reminiscent of Ghālib's way of thought:

\[ \text{Be at times the rubbish of the torrent, and at times the straw of the flame—} \]
\[ \text{He who wanders through different modes will not dwell in one halting-place.} \]

گاهی خانائے سیل، گاہی شعله باش
سکنی یک سرخه سالک اطوار نیست

Ghālib would say, in describing his own state of mind:

\[ \text{Like unto a wave I waxed into a flood, in the style of the flame I dance in fire.} \]

ہن ووج سیالم به طوان
یہ رکش شعلہ سیرقسم دراشت

Time and again he returns to the association of straw and fire, sometimes inventing daring images, as in his qaṣīda on Divine Unity where he says that he who ventures to describe God in words

\[ \text{has thrown on the steed of the flame the horse-armor of straw.} \]

آتکہ و صفتا، را ز خود بینی به کتن داده ساز
یاد کرد شعلہ خی بر کتنوان انداده

i.e., has attempted something impossible, and has thus doomed himself to failure.

The flame is not irritated when straw hangs upon it—why, then, should the poet refrain from speaking when mean and miserly men insinuate themselves into his company?

طمع از دخل خانائ بانزه از سحق
شعله را، غالب، از آوریش خانائ کچھ باک

(The verse, which again contains a hint to the 'flame of speech', more-
over embodies a subtle hint on the word khas in its twofold meaning of 'rubbish' and 'mean, miser'. On the contrary, the flame is in need of some straw for presenting itself more radiantly:

بیع عرب سبز خوش انجیج مادور
چه شامکه که ناز او نئد به خار و خشک

Ghālib also uses the relation of straw, thorns and fire in the traditional meaning of substantial union. Just as Rūmi had described the block of iron that assumes itself to be the fire in which it had been cast, Ghālib claims:

Straw and thorns, whenever they burn in fire
become fire —
I have died from the delight of the lip so much,
that I shall become soul.

خاز و خس هر که در آتش سوخت، آتش میشود
سردم از ذوق لپت جناد که جان خواهد شد

The soul is imagined, in poetry, as being manifest in the breath and bearing thus association with the kiss. The exchange of souls by means of a kiss is an idea found already in ancient Greek and Latin poetry. In Persian, jan be-lab, 'he whose soul is on his lips', is a term for somebody on the point of death, but in poetical language it is moreover a term for someone who is dying, longing for a kiss, to put his soul into the mouth of the beloved and thus partake in the latter's soul, while sucking the lips that quicken him. From here, the connection with the life-giving breath of Jesus was easy. The lover in Ghālib's verse is changed into soul because he is obsessed by the soul of the beloved, being consumed by the fire of love.

An idea inherited from ancient science is likewise found in Ghālib's straw-and-fire imagery: the straw is behold in expectation of the fire, or fire is viewed as an essential part of its ingredients (being one of the four elements which constitute the material world) and longs for its liberation. The poet speaks, therefore, of the fire which can be detected from the thrub of the pulse of the straw and longs for fire.

عطر سی اینی به جانی که وی به خو هوا
نیش خس می تشم شعله سوزان سمجا

He also may describe those who have attained the last station of longing by saying that

they have become straw and thorns for their own fire

بیچر عقرب که در آتش، و علم اهل شرق
آب اینی آک که شش و خشک که هر گم

That means, they consummate themselves in uninterrupted burning which they enhance by casting their hearts and souls into the flames.

As far as I can judge, there are few poets in the Islamic world who used the symbolism of fire as frequently as Ghālib did. It is surely no accident that Iqbal, in his Javidnāme, where he confronts Ghālib, Tahirā and Hāllāj in the Sphere of Jupiter, often uses metaphors and expressions associated with constant fire, fire under the feet, 'fire of longing'.

To be sure, already in classical times—especially in the verses of "Aṭṭār" and Rūmi—almost innumerable verses sing of the fire of the heart, the burning of love, the roasting of the liver in the flames of separation and the annihilation of the moth in the flame of the candle; but the tragic aspects of fire-symbalism became more and more evident in Indo-Persian literature, beginning with "Urīf"'s gāsidas and ghazals.

Certainly, it was Ḥāfiz who in the mid-14th century coined the verse:

The fire of the cheek of the rose has burnt the harvest of the nightingale;
the smiling face of the candle became the calamity of the moth.

آتش رخشنگر خزین بیلی سوخت
چربه خندان شخ آفت پرورنده خد

This imagery has been imitated through the centuries—whether by "Urīf" who 'throws fire into the nightingales by his gālbāng" (the 'loud shout' or 'note of the nightingale', a word which contains the word gul, 'rose') or by Ṣīr who speaks in his Urdu verses of his beloved with similar expressions. Finally Ghālib portrays the same idea in his Persian verse:

The growth of the rose has cast me today in suspecting,
perhaps that my nest on the rose's twig is burnt again.

سرا دیدن گل در گمان فکد امروز
که باز بر سر شاخ گل آشیام سوخت

He also may describe those who have attained the last station of
He speaks of this strange association between rose-fire and nightingale in his qaṣīda on Divine Unity:

آتشی از روز گل‌های ببار روخته
شعله در یان مرجع صبح خوان انداخته

The Creator Himself has placed fire into the face of the rose abloom in spring, thus casting the flames into the poor bird’s heart.

To know the manifestation of the rose as burning fire:
آن جلوهٔ گل آتش سوزان شناخت

That is what he considered essential for the lover. This motif of the ‘rose-fire’ has been very popular also among Turkish poets, even in our day.¹²

Ghâlib can as well combine the two images of the Ḥâfiz-verse, fancying that the fiery face of the rose has attained such a state of glow that even the butterflies draw nigh to its twigs:

گل حیرت بر فروخت بد انسان که بارها
برنار را هم به سر گذاشتر بر

This is a beautiful husr-e tafṣîl, ‘phantastic etiology’, for explaining why butterflies flutter around a rosebush, as Persian poetry otherwise will not permit them any movement but to spin around the candle and to perish in the flame. Ghâlib believes that the nightingale too should be burnt out of jealousy for the rose, and he reproaches him because his wings are not yet coloured by the red flame.

بلبل زرد زیبای بروانه سوختن
رگین به شعله ترا بال و به هنوز

The bird whose nest is being burnt
طاطاری که بزرگان لسانته و ارژد

is a subtle metaphor for the heart that trembles at the thought of separation.

And here, Ghâlib is surely indebted to Kalim and his oft imitated verse:

In this garden, when a rose does not listen to my lament — where is the lightning to carry away my nest?

Kalim, too, had compared the cheek of the rose to this ravaging glare of lightning.¹³ The relation between flame, lightning (which is in Oriental poetry always seen as red), and the red roses could lead, then, to new combinations which might add to the picture the red colour of blood or of wounds.¹⁴

It was ʿUrţî whose impressive poems (with the rhyme-word āţish, ‘fire’, or āţish-ast, ‘is fire’) have largely contributed to shape the fire-imagery of the Indo-Persian poets. One of his poems has been imitated by Ghâlib:

Without ceremonies—to be in affliction is better than the fear of affliction —
the bottom of the sea is a paradisical fountain,
and (only) the surface of the sea is fire.

یک تکف در لیل بوده با از یک نست
قر دریا سریا و روی دریا آتشت

This verse is an exact reversal of ʿUrţî’s statement, to wit, that fire lies concealed within the depths of the sea so that the lover should become first a fish, swimming in the clear water and revelling in the pleasure of life and love; but that later he is to become a salamander and thus better equipped to endure the pain which expects him the more the deeper he gets involved.¹⁵ Naṣīrī who, like ʿUrţî, composed several poems rhyming in ‘fire’, similarly describes the path of the lover amidst seven seas of fire.

راه عاشق دریا هفت دریا آتش است

And Kalim compares the poor man who ‘enters the path of love with the cane of reason’ to one who tries to traverse a fiery desert with wooden legs.¹⁶ Before him, Tâlib-ʿī Amuli had opened his divān with the poetical prayer:

O my God, enhance the flame of my longing!
Make me into fire and cast me into the world!

اللہ شعله شوقی فروزن ساز
سرا آتشی کن و دعائم انداز

thus preparing the reader for the numerous verses on ‘fire’, ‘burning’
and related words in his divan. But it seems that Ghâlib has surpassed his predecessors by the variety of expressions connected with fire-symbolism. He said, in one of his frequent ironical lines, that people fancy him to be a fire worshipper when they see the sparks leap from his hot sighs:

آتش چست کیتی هم اهل جهان سبب
سر کم ناحید علیه شر بار ذکر

and comparisons of his state with that of Zarathustra, or of his heart with the burnt fire temple

سوخت آتشکده ، آتش نظم بختیدن... (neither of them rare in classical Persian poetry) are found several times in both Urdu and Persian.

It is a dishonour for the breast if it is not a fire temple,
It is a disgrace for the heart if the breath does not spread fire

غة تغ سیکه دل آگر آتشکده نه هو
غه عار دل قیس آگر آدر نیز نه

Ghâlib may also, like a number of earlier poets, among them Amîr Khusrau, allude to the custom of the Hindus to burn their dead or to make a wife commit sutee; for he wants his fiery state to continue even after death:

Burn my bier, for I am not less than a brahmin,
I can not carry into my tomb the shame of not-burning.

تمس سردوش کلم آبرهمن نیم
نگ تسوخت نتون در مزار نبرد

Sukhtan and jahâ ‘to burn’, in Persian and Urdu respectively, are two of the key-words of Ghâlib’s poetry, and there are numerous verses which rhyme either to ‘fire’ or to words connected with fire. The poet eventually needs no longer fiery tulips and the red blossoms of the Judas-tree, as his whole nature is fire.

آتش منیر نیتاد من زده ام
لاده و ارخان نمی خواهم

Since his nature becomes a red flower bed as a result of all the sparks that glow within him, the dark spot (dâgh), e.g., cauterization-mark, placed upon his heart by separation and yearning, can suddenly sprout into a chirâghân, a firework; it is the ‘seed of a cypress of firework’.

سرا هر داغ دل علیه صر عرفاگان کا

Although Ghâlib has once written a qita on a genuine fire-work in Delhi (Qît. Nr. 59), the expression chirâghân is usually associated with the sparks that issue from the scar of his heart, delighting everyone with a most lovely spectacle. The Western reader may be strangely reminded of the lines of Edna St. Vincent Millay who uses the burning-image in a very similar connection:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night—
But oh, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light.

Ghâlib’s imagery sometimes surpasses the limits of what the general reader would consider good taste; as for example when he seeks ‘the roast of the salamander’s heart’ for the table of his heart

پیاز به دست مه کبک دل سمندر کوچیچ

From the days of Pliny, the salamander has been considered to be an extremely ‘cold’ animal which can extinguish fire. In Islamic folklore it is sometimes thought to have been born in fire and is, at least from the 13th century onwards, regarded as a bird, not as a reptile—perhaps a confusion with the Phoenix who is reborn out of fire. We find quite an amazing amount of these animals creeping through Ghâlib’s poetry though I doubt that he had ever actually been aware of a genuine fire-salamander’s appearance, as the species is nowhere found in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent. He may say, that the nation of the roses has adopted the salamander’s religion:

پیکه بہ آتش چتود نبیه سمندر گلو
امت کل نجف فوج کیسی سمندر گرفت

for the face of the rose is glowing like fire. He himself bears within his breast the heart of a moth fluttering intent on self-immolation, but tempered with the steadfastness of a salamander which cannot burn.

این چه شرارت که از شوق تودر سر داه
دل بروانه و تکمین سمندر داه
Imitating "Urfi's fire-ghazal he describes himself as a combination of outward water and inward fire so that he who searches his sea for fishes will find salamanders instead.

ا‌ز یرود سو آب اما از دورین سو آتش
ما‌هی ار جوی سند سایی از دریای سن

Or else, he may claim to unite in himself the nature of the nightingale and the function of the salamander, etc.

بعید میدانی که غالب چون بزریم به دهم
من که خلج بیل و دنگ سند داشتم

The poet wants to be set fully afame so that neither 'smoke of speech' nor hearing may rise from him

تاکن تبد شکایت زیبان به خزید
بن آتش که سبیان زیبان به خزید

but that all and everything be burnt. That is why he is overjoyed when beholding his present state:

How lovely is my state: the body fire! the bed fire!
Where is the wild rue that I may throw it on the fire?

خوشای حالم تن آتش بستر آتش
سپید کو که اشتیم بر آتش

The seed of the wild rue, sipand, is used for fumigations against the evil eye; when thrown onto the fire it 'dances', as many poets say. Since Ghalib considers complete burning as the state of perfect happiness, he needs magic to ward off the Evil Eye of any envious person who might wish to harm him. Just as earlier poets commonly cast their hearts, or bits of their liver as a substitute for the wild rue upon the fire of love, Ghalib compares the innermost spot of the heart, the suwaidā', little black one', to the rue.26

But what happens to the poor lover who is so completely consumed by the flames of love? His body is burnt to cinders, and so is his heart — why, then, gives the beloved no rest and disturbs his remnants, poking in his ashes? She will no more find that heart which once burnt for her ...

In a comparatively simple Persian verse Ghalib claims to be superior to Abraham for whom, as the tradition attests, the flames of Nimrod’s pyre were changed into a cool rosengarden (cf. Sura 21/69);27 Ghalib, however, needs not even a pyre for burning:

Look, how I can burn without flame, without sparks!

شیده که به آتش نشست ابراهیم
بین که بی شور و شعله می‌توانست سوخت

Once more Ghalib has used the Qur’anic figure of Abraham, so often associated by Persian poets with the symbolism of fire-rosengarden—in one of his finest didactic lines he alludes to the obedience of Ishmael who was to be sacrificed by his father:

The child puts his neck under the sword of his father, when this very father enters into the fire of Nimrod.

فرزند زیر تغییر پدر س نیم گو
گر خود پدر در آتش نمود نمود

The child beholds the heroic behaviour of his father who is willing to undergo all trials and tribulations for the sake of his faith or his ideals, seeing in him the perfect model for himself and the ideal with which he wishes to be identified; he will thereupon obey him without qualms—a sound pedagogic counsel for parents!

Notwithstanding its destructive force, fire definitely enjoys a positive evaluation in Ghalib’s poetic language, as it is associated with the power of love and is the sensuous symbol for the domination of the Beloved when He reveals Himself in His cruel and wrathful aspect of ‘consuming Fire’, a fire which destroys everything besides itself.28 This positive evaluation becomes particularly vivid when Ghalib evokes the image of lightning, which was, in traditional Persian poetry, often associated with the smile or the laughter, in contrast to the ‘weeping of the cloud’. We saw earlier that straw and grass are longing for the moment when their interior fire shall be set free.

Urfi puts it correctly when he says:

Wherever my way passed in the desert of gnostics,
I saw the grass in trading with the lightning.
A DANCE OF SPARKS

Ghālib therefore considers the grass (that is he himself), as having been athirst already in Non-Existence (‘ādam) for the lightning of affliction.

A frequently interpreted verse of his which asserts a close association between destruction and edification belongs to the same group of images:

The First Principle (hayālā) of the lightning which destroys the harvest is the hot blood of the husbandman.

The villager who cultivates the earth bears in his own nature the fire which, one day, will be manifest in destroying his harvest; and since ‘burning’ conveys the meaning of destruction for the sake of edification, the lightning will be instrumental in leading the harvest to its proper destination.89 Another of Ghālib’s Urdu verses conveys a similar idea:

The brightness of life comes from the house-destroying love. The assembly is without a candle as long as the lightning is not in the harvest.

Thus ‘the spiritually free have lit the candle of the house of mourning from the lightning’ which destroys all.

The reader acquainted with German literature and philosophy will certainly be reminded of Nietzsche’s view expressed in the foreword of ‘Frühliche Wissenschaft’ where he attributes to the flame the same positive value:

Wir müssen beständig unsere Gedanken aus unserem Schmerz gebären und mütterlich ihnen alles mitgeben, was wir von Blut, Feuer, Lust, Leidenschaft, Qual, Gewissen, Schicksal, Verhängnis in uns haben. Leben—dass heisst für uns, Alles, was wir sind, beständig in Licht und Flamme verwandeln.

The Western reader who is usually not accustomed to this philosophy of immolation and probably shocked by the repetition of such weird metaphors in Ghālib’s poetical work should remember such sentences, all the more as the remarkable cross-relation between Ghālib, Iqbal and Nietzsche can be understood by meditating upon their similar approaches to the problem of what we may call the Phoenix-effect, i.e., gaining new life by willingly burning oneself along with one’s ‘nest’. This imagery is in perfect harmony with the verses of many mystics in the lands of Islam who have regarded the annihilation of the self as the prerequisite for union with the eternal Beloved. For them, suffering “is God Himself, whereas happiness comes from Him” as Hallāj once said.90 These ideas came to be combined with the actual suffering of the masses brought about by the deteriorating political and social situation. They were further nurtured in an environment where the lover had to overcome severe obstacles on the worldly plan, be it the cruelty inflicted upon him by his coy mistress or his coquettish young beloved, be it the tyranny of unjust rulers or the assault of plundering soldiers. Thus these ideas oozed into all strata of thought to permeate the whole fabric of Persian, Urdu and Turkish literatures until, at the end of the 19th century, a new Weltgefühl expresses itself in those literatures. The poets began to teach activity instead of suffering, and self-realisation instead of annihilation. Yet, the role of suffering and martyrdom as a means of obtaining a higher goal is central in their verses as well; now it was the flame of the thirst for political freedom which coloured their poetry.

To turn back once more to the lightning: we should not forget the charming image in Ghālib’s vocabulary that the lightning ‘has dyed his feet with henna’—anyone whose feet have been bedaubed with red henna will find himself unable to walk fast; Ghālib might therefore think that life passes so quickly that compared with it the lightning is as slow as if he had henna-dyed feet.

The poet often describes himself as fiery, so much so that his
A DANCE OF SPARKS

He goes even so far as to tell his reader not to be afraid of eternal punishment in Hell: for that will be a lovely spring without autumn.

The tertium comparationis is, probably, the left-out rose of which the fire reminds him; the roses of our garden will wither in the fall but Hell-fire is everlasting ...

Still, this daring hyperbole is contradicted by a—though less artistic but more human—line in which he addresses the Prophet of Islam, trusting in his intercession for his community:

**Eternal Hell is unlawful for Thy community—**
_Beware that thou shouldst not intercede for those who are burnt!_

The idea that hellfire is no longer required for those burnt by love in this life goes back to early Islamic mystics. Jalāluddīn Rūmī has once associated this idea with the name of Muḥammad's arch-enemy, called Abū Lāhāb, 'Father of the flame', whose major sin was that he lacked this fire of love:

_It is said, the burning fire is the lot of the infidels,
I have not seen anyone deprived of Thy fire but Abū Lāhāb._

As to Ghalib, it is not hellfire which burns him, who is 'infidel owing to love', but the 'jealousy of the heat of Ṣan‘ān's adventures':

Shaikh Ṣan‘ān (as *Aṭṭār* describes him in his *Mājjīq ut-ṭair*) had been a devout saint who had fallen in love with a Christian maiden, had exchanged the rosary for the infidel's girdle, had drunk wine and
herded the swine of his beloved. He became a favourite model case for those poets who stressed the overwhelming force of love which can destroy even the piety of 70 years. According to ‘Aṭṭār, the Shaikhs returned later on into the fold of Islam. His fate inspired several of Ghalib’s lines as the latter claims to envy him, the veritable heretic. But this kind of envy and admiration has been a topos with Persian poets of the post-‘Aṭṭār period, and is not the expression of a subjective state of mind.

Since the use of contrasting pairs of words belongs to the standard rhetorical devices in Persian poetry, the combination of fire and water as manifest in the unhappy lover’s tears and the burning of his heart has always been favoured by poets. This combination was popular already with the earliest Arabic mystical poets around 900 who claimed that a dearth of fire and water would certainly take place if the burning hearts of the lovers and the floods of their tears would not vouchsafe both elements to the world. It would surprise us if Ghalib had not written a number of lines in this strain:

*My weeping is such that water is beneath the dust—* that much.
*My lamentation is such that there is fire up to the summit of Pleiads*

A subtle, though traditional, pun juxtaposes *thurayya* ‘Pleiads’, and *thard*, ‘dust’. The fire in his breast and the water (he means, of course, the wine) in his cup rend the poet independent of both Hell and the sweet well of Kauthar in Paradise.

*From the depths of the sea and the sea of paradise*

In a similar though wittier image he claims to possess

*the furnace of the old woman and the condition of the deluge*

According to Islamic tradition the deluge started with some hot water which emerged from the furnace of an old woman in the Iraqi town of Kūfa: Ghalib’s heart incorporates the heat of this very furnace, and in his eyes there is enough water to inundate the whole earth.

Another contrasting pair of words which Persian-writing poets would use frequently is the pun on gulshan, ‘rose-garden’, and gulkhan, the ‘fireplace in the bathhouse’, ‘dust-bin’. It designates the contrast between the delightful place where roses bloom, visited by happy people in the springtime, and the lowest place in the bathhouse where only the most indigent used to seek shelter in winter, and where a few red sparks might occasionally evoke the memory of the rosegarden. The *gulkhan* is, as the medieval Turkish poet Yûnus Emre (d. 1321) puts it so excellently, the place where the nightingales had burnt their wings in the fire of love. Kalim remarks that eventually even the leaves and petals of the roses will wither and decay and that their shrubs will be cast in the fire—therefore:

*The eye that sees One, knows no difference between rosegarden and ash-house.*

Ghalib, in his turn, reverts the idea and tells us that he is wounded by the rosegarden, as it is spring, and no duration (of happiness possible) but made happy by the fireplace, for there is autumn, and yet no autumn

*from: The radiance of the ascendent straw is dependent upon the ash-house—*

Straw, as mentioned before, reaches its destination only when thrown into the fire: that is the happiest moment predicted by its horoscope. That is why Ghalib complains about his own uneven state:

*When I am a rose, I am in the ash-house; when I am a straw, I am in the rosegarden.*

Whichever he may chance to be, he feels that he is in the wrong place, a place where his true value can not be appreciated.
One of the favourite images in Persian poetry is that of the candle, used in different connotations. The traditional combination is of the candle with the moth as found for the first time in Ḥallaj's Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīm. Besides providing a fine metaphor for the tongue and thus for speech, the candle was from classical times often used to express the poet’s own state of mind: it laughs and weeps at the same time; its flame is radiant with joy, but its body melts away in hot tears.\(^{59}\) It is natural that Ghalib should have used the image of the candle as often as his predecessors had done. Most of the current comparisons (so that with the red tulips) are found in his Persian ghazal rhyming in shah, ‘candle’.

We find, in his poetry, the candle in association with the moth, although not too frequently: there is also the traditional comparison of the candle with the tongue, given in his Urdu poem with the rhyme-word shah, ‘candle’:

*The story-telling of the candle resembles the way of those who aim at annihilation.*

For its tongue, the wick, diminishes by ‘talking’, e.g., giving light. And silence means death for those endowed with the gift of speech, for the extinguished candle is useless—an idea expressed almost verbatim by Mir Dard.\(^{59}\)

Ghalib invents still another positive evaluation of the fire in association with the candle: it rescues the lover from his troubles and his pain. His way of expressing this idea is quite ingenious:

*By the splendour of beauty the difficulty of the lovers becomes solved, the thorn of the candle’s foot will not disappear, unless the flame disentrenches it.*

Here, the wick is compared to the thorn which, embedded in the foot, causes pain; the wick’s consumption by the flame means the destruction of the ‘thorn’, hence the deliverance of the candle from its pain which lasts as long as life itself.\(^{60}\)

But the candle is more often connected with death—the underlying idea is that it illuminates and animates the gay assembly at night, but is extinguished when morning comes, just as the conversation of those friends—who have gladdened the assembly and have set their hearts to gleaming—ends in these morning hours.\(^{61}\) The expression shah-i maḥfīl, ‘candle of the assembly’, which is used to designate the most attractive personality in such gatherings should be borne in mind when reading any line associating the candle with the assembly and the morning. Usafi had written the famous verse:

*Do not imagine that when you leave, the world will also pass away. A thousand candles have been slain, but the assembly is still there.*

The ‘killed’ candle as well as the ‘mute oil-lamp’ (chiragh, an oil-lamp with a wick, deprived of which it is useless and without tongue) became standard words for the Mughal poets, and the images created by their ingenious use are sometimes very touching and impressive.\(^{62}\) Ghalib speaks of the candle which shines till dawn and then is healed from the grief of existence.\(^{40}\)

*The smoke of the slain candle* is an expression of which Ghalib is particularly fond,
he compares the pulse of one who is rendered ill by his loyalty in love with the smoke of the slain candle: the fire of love no longer consumes him, and only the last throbbing issue of smoke reveals the tiny spark of life left within him.

Quite close to this melancholy metaphor is the expression 'candle of the grave'. Urfi had furnished the classical model for it in his verse:

Wherever I turn there comes the scent of the killed lamp —
Probably formerly the tomb of those slain by love was there.

The most utterly desolate state in which description Indo-Persian and Urdu poets indulge is that of the candle flickering at the tomb of a destitute stranger. Ghalib, once more, laments his place outside the pale of society, and asks:

Why burn in the desert at the tomb of strangers
that radiant candle
which would be fitting for the happy gathering?

During his imprisonment, he complaints in his truly touching tarkibband of his situation in quite similar terms taken from the sphere of burning, though not from the candle-imagery:

Do not burn my aloes-wood in vain—if it has to be burnt
then let it burn in the king's censer.

The comparison of the suffering lover with aloes-wood that produces lovely fragrance while being consumed by the flames was known from the early days of Persian poetry and Rumi often combines the 'sud, 'aloe', with its sâz, 'burning' and the corn, 'festival', and its sâz, 'manner', or 'instrument'. Our poet may even admit that his life passes in such darkness that the light of the candle of the tomb makes him joyful

or he may call himself 'the moth of the candle of his own tomb'.

Unable to express the thousands of wishes which are hidden in his breast he heaves a sigh:

The dead candle am I, without tongue, on the

Ghalib speaks of smoke in connection with the shadow of the Kingbird's wings, but he also devotes quite a number of verses to the dark smoke enshrouding his heart and his life, symbolizing his confused mind and the hopelessness of his situation. In an address to his beloved he draws a comparison between her and this state of his: she lives in the colourful waves of joy, he fills heaven and earth with the fire of his sighs.

This poem contains many fire-images other than this from its very first line to its end. Or else he complains:

From bouquets and bouquets of hyacinths and roses your bed-linen
from heaps and heaps of smoke and sparks my woof and warp.

The smoke and the hyacinths, the sparks and the roses form a perfect parallelism as it is visible also in the closing lines of his qasida III in honour of the Prophet. More than once he speaks of the fire-particles that rise from his bed-stead.
or set the bedroom afame:

and not only his bedding but his whole existence is, without distinction, made of fire—both sides of the fabric of his life are alike, as it is the case with the flame.

The poet tells us that all the walls of his hut have become blackened by the smoke rising from his heart, so that his abode looks like the black tent of Laila, the beloved of the demented Majnun:

In one of his matnawis he again describes how he is completely transformed into flames without smoke; therefore he can once more claim in another poem that his fire of longing produces no smoke whatsoever; his beloved can therefore hardly be blamed for her lack of tears when beholding him.

The situation would be quite different if the glow within him had produced some outward sign of it, that is: the smoke which bites the eyes and causes tears. 48

This verse is typical of Ghalib's talent to express a melancholy topic with a dash of humour,—occasionally attaining the first outposts of black humour. That is surely true of a verse in which he has used the traditional image of the blackish down appearing on the face of the beloved and consequently destroying his youthful beauty. He utters this thought, so common to Persian poetry, in his fire-imagery, possibly influenced by one of Sa'di's quatrains:

As a result of the dawn's advent the market of the beloved became cold (i.e. without customers).
The down of the friend's face looks so—so-to-speak the smoke of the slant candle.

The radiant, candle-like loveliness vanishes into black lines which mark the end of the friend's youth so that she can no longer remain an object of admiration and love for his former worshiper. Very elegant is the combination of the 'cold', i.e., no longer frequented, market with the smoke which is a sign of the extinguished, i.e., 'cold' candle.

We are therefore not at all surprised that Ghalib predicts that after his death

the flame of love will wear black, after me ...

Ghalib sees signs of fire everywhere. In the garden,

the path is the wick for the tulip's cauterization-mark

The tulip, burning red and therefore often compared to flames, is distinguished by the black spot in its 'heart'; 48 this spot—not rarely mentioned by poets in a negative sense—is now associated with the 'wick' of the straight path in the orchard which the beloved might have graced once with her visit; thus burning the hearts of the flowers with the mark of yearning and separation. The sunset which dyes the cloud in a flush of lovely red hues reminds Ghalib of the moment when fire rained upon the rosegarden on the day of separation from his beloved.

This is a very appropriate image when one thinks of the small rose-like clouds that momentarily spread over the sky in certain evenings.
And those who know Delhi or Lahore will certainly remember how the red sandstone buildings of the Mughal period, like the Red Fort, answer light to light immediately after sunset; the walls appear transparent for an instant as if they conceal a fire which now shines forth in shades of deep copper and purple.

Ghalib may exclaim in jubilant exaggeration that he would burn the wings of the Anqa in the realm of Non-Existence by dint of the fire of his imagination, but in the same breath he may write one of his most touching poetic lines in which sheer human hopelessness is expressed without any rhetorical play:

In the heart, the delight of union and the memory of the friend are no longer left —
Fire fell into this house so that whatever was has been burnt to cinders.

Or could anything be more forlorn than the idea that even the memory of the beloved and the wish for union has been, for ever, annihilated?

FOOTNOTES
1 A weird connection between flame and straw is the verse:

میر ای ره ی تبیت کے طرح اور ایک چیز کا باہمی
داغ پینہ دست مزیری، شعلہ گیا کہ گردنان

Urft, Kallyid, ghazal Nrr. 316.

2 Kalim was apparently very fond of the image of the stone-throwing children, cf. Divan, ghazal Nrr. 159; id. Nrr. 497 has an elegant combination of the stones and the desert in which the demented lover will, eventually, abide:

Due to the impudence of the children no stones remained in the walls—
When the town becomes waste, I draw myself into the desert.

3 Sultān Ṭulun is quoted as writing:

سرچ اگر بزیان شیر گرزیں تبصیلا میکم

In another poem (quoted AP p. 259) he combines the "stones of the children" with the glass-vessel which, in Persian imagery, is always scattered by the stones flung at it; a similar combination is found in a ghazal by Māghar Jānjanān (AP p. 284). How popular this image was can be gathered from a verse by Ázdī Bilgrāmī, the 18th century writer whose verses are, though not at all very original, yet an excellent compendium of all those stylistic and rhetorical devices that were in fashion in 18th century India (cf. the charming verse in his biography by Mir Ṭulīā Qānī, Maqālāt ahl-shurʿa, ed. Ḥ. Rashdī, Karachi 1957, p. 58):

سیلگ اور ملخان ست در دشت جنون یابایین ما
وز بیان بیان و گل سنگی بیگان میکم

4 Mir Dard, Urdu Divān p. 73; Bedil, Divān, p. 260.—Ghalib (U 107) has connected fire-symbolism and the children's game:

یہ سیلگ پر برنت ساتی سنیں ہند
پیمانہ فلک ست ملخان اپنا

Another comparison points to the roses on the tombs of saints and martyrs:

My roses and my candles became wasted on the tomb of the martyrs:
You did not consent (to my wishes), and my life was wasted in supplication.

5 IV Nrr. 210. He uses the expression also in S 39, Q XXVII, and says in an Urdu verse that the silent beauties use "the smoke of the voice's flame" as collyrium for their eyes.

The expression shibāl-i divāz was common in India, see the examples by Ghanti (Kashmir i 999), Sūlīk (id. i 305) and Ḥijāb (id. A 53); the latter two are connected with the nightingale; Bedil, Divān; Mir Dard, Divān-i fārsī p. 64.—Ghalib speaks also of the shibāl-i sūkhān, the 'candle of speech':

حسن فروظ شمع سنن دور ہے اسد بہت کوہا دل گئھا پہنا کہ گئھا کوہ.
Combinations of fire and kābāb 'roast', though quite unpleasant for Western taste, are commonplace in Persian and related poetry from early times; to roast his heart is a normal action for every poet, and he often will add the 'wine of his blood' to the roast. Najūr Alī Shīrīnī makes the nightingale roast of the rose's fire (Kadīmī II 934), an idea frequently expressed in various forms (during this period of Indo-Persian poetry).

A few examples from Ghalīb's verses in M III; due to the roses, spring becomes the kābāb for its own fire,

The cloud of his grace makes Paradise grow out of Hellebore,

or the kābāb of spring burns in the oven of the tulip.

Cf. IV Nr. 157, Nr. 71, Nr. 151; S. p. 37. Not even the Prophet of Islam is spared such a comparison:

The lightning of his wrath turns the clouds of mercy into smoke of kābāb.

* Other examples: IV Nr. 117, Nr. 200, Nr. 243, particularly Nr. 213:

* Out of envy that my breast is so fiery the fire draws a dagger of flame towards itself.

* ز رنگ سیاه می‌گریزه که دارم

کنن در این شب بی خورم نیاز آمیز

Cf. also U 61 'the flame-carrying breath':

* بل که کوچک، هم اکنون برای جایی

ای ناامامی، نفس شعله بار چیف

Rūmī, Mathnawī II 1347. The same symbolism was used by a number of Christian mystics, like Richard of St. Victor, Mechthild of Magdeburg, St. Catherine of Siena (cf. E. Underhill, Mysticism, p. 421): further in the loga— speculations of Origen, in the mysticism of the Greek monk Symeon the New Theologian, etc. In the Indian tradition, Baha'ī Rāhib, the partner of Prince Dārū Shikoh, used the 'iron-in-fire' imagery; cf. C. Hurnt-L. Massignon, Les Entretiens de Lahore, JA 1926. Baidī, Divān p. 86 uses a line very similar to that of Ghālib.

* Cf. Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VII 739 ff. One of the numerous classical examples are the lines of the Roman poet Petronius: haec simus calentes et transfundimus hine et hinc labellis errantes animos.

The idea of the exchange of souls by means of a kiss has often been expressed by European poets; likewise the expression of Christian mystical theology according to which the Holy Spirit is the 'kiss between Father and Son' comes from this root.

* The examples in Persian and related poetry are almost numberless; suffice it to mention Rūmī's line (Rubā'īyāt I 334 b 1):

My soul came onto my lips—give me your tip
so that I may put my soul into your mouth;

The connection of the life-bestowing breath of Jesus with the kiss of the beloved, so common in Islamic poetry, belongs to this cluster of images.

* The combination rose-flame-nightingale in Ghalīb's poetry: IV Nr. 62, Nr. 78, Nr. 179; Nr. 92 (with gūlān). For the imagery see A. Schimmel, Rose and Nightingale, (Nurnen V 2); Fāżīl (d. 1563) the author of the Turkish epic poem Gǔl u bāhīl (German translation by J. von Hammer-Purgstall, Gǔl u bāhīl, das ist Ross und Nachtigall, 1834) uses in his introductory prayer poem almost the same words about the creator who has lit the torches of the roses and cast fire into the harvest of the nightingales (Cf. E.J.W. Gibb, History of Ottoman Poetry, VI 147 ff.). Other examples from Persian and Turkish poetry in Schimmel, I.e. p. 102; among modern Turkish poets we may mention Ahmet Hacişin, Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Kâzım Tanpinar who used the rose-fire imagery; the finest example is found in a ghazal by the Mevlavī poet Ghalīb Dede (d. 1799), vd. Gibb, I.e. VI p. 147:

The rose is fire, the rose-swig fire, the rose-garden fire, the bank of the brook is fire...

* Kalim, Divān Nr. 56 ghazal.

* Shāh *Abdūl Latīf Bihārī, Srāj ja risāla, Sur Sārang 10,10 describes the red lightning that has put on the red wedding garment and thus becomes a lovely symbol of the Beloved whom the bride expects as longingly as the thirsty earth waits for the lightning and the ensuing rain.

* Urfī, Kuliyāt, ghazal p. 375; Cf. id. ghazal p. 378:

The visual washing of the martyr of love must be performed by fire, not with water.

* How could one wash a flame with water?

Gůlシュ round his neck, now he has no heart

That may be inspired by Rūmī, Divān Kāhin Nr. 1096.

* Kalim, Divān, ghazal Nr. 236.

* Comparisons taken from the Zoroastrian tradition are frequently found in Persian literature without, however, implying a real knowledge of pre-Islamic customs and ideals. M. Mičić has discussed the Zoroastrian heritage in Persian literature in his MarzandASN a rūsīr-En dair adabiyat-e Fārsī, Tehran 1326 sh/1947. The fire as qibla of the Zoroastrians is found from Daqiq (d. ca 980) onwards (cf. H.H. Schaeuer "War Daqiqi Zoroastrier?" in Festschrift George Jacob, 1932). Comparisons of the garden and its red flowers with the fire temple were popular in early Persian poetry (Abū'l-Farābī Rūmī) and occur frequently in Hafiz's poems. Later, the juxtaposition of fire temple and mihrāb or Ka'b became a
fixed tops, just as that of the shaikh and the brahmin. Typical is "Urft's line:

The niche of my firetemple laughed a hundred times at the mihrāb.

18 Examples from Ghālib: Q I; IV Nr. 66, Nr. 78, Nr. 84; Nr. 143; Nr. 248: Nr. 288; Nr. 318; Nr. 320, and U 141:

آتشکده که سوئیه مرا یاددانید ای وان، اگر موعود افخمیم آن چی؟

Charming is IV Nr. 156:

Whosoever sees her on the road:
The ghibla of the fire worshippers comes a-walking!

مرکز پایت در روستی کویری ها! گیده آتش پرستان مورد

For the rosy cheeks of the beloved remind the poet of fire which is, again, the ghibla of the fireworshipers; thus, looking at the beautiful beloved everyone becomes a fireworshipper. This is only a deviation from the usual idea that the lovers are idol-worshipers, but parast: the meaning remains the same.

The Hindu in connection with burning is mentioned by Nizāmi, Haft Paikar 34 (see H. Ritter, Über die Bilder sprache Nizamis, Berlin 1927, p. 12, 13). The custom of salāt is several times mentioned in the poems of Amir Khurrān, who must have eyewitnessed it in India, cf. Divān 678:

To die from love, a friend—learn that from the Hindu, for it is not easy to breathe the blazing fire.

Cf. for the combination Hindu-fire id. Nr. 42, Nr. 735, Nr. 1442. Other poets have taken over this idea and speak of the 'fireworshipping Hindu' or the Indian who burns himself, see Jāmi, Divān 208; Nr. 312, etc.; Māuliānā Qāsim Kāb in: Msaddāt ash-sha‘bār, p. 677; "Urft, Kulliyāt, ghazal 327; Naṣīr, Divān, ghazal Nr. 77; Nr. 166, Nr. 328 in the 19th century Furtīghi, Divān 221, and in early classical times Khāqānī, Divān, qaṭla p. 223. Even in the poetry of the regional languages the combination Hindu-fire is not rare, thus in Khusūḥī Khān Kha‘lak’s Pashio poetry (see Raverty, Selections p. 221). For the whole complex cf. A. Schimmel, "Turk and Hindu", a poetical image and its applications to history, in: Proceedings of the Fourth eleva Dita Conference, Wiesbaden 1974.—Ghālib uses the image also in IV Nr. 256:

گوری با هشتم کرک کس کچ درکه که آن چنین لمسه زد که آتش کرده که

19 IV Nr. 59; Nr. 78; Nr. 91, Nr. 213; cf. the imagery in band 2 of the turkibbon written in jali, S. 37.

The expression dīgh 'scar, cauterisation mark' occurs very frequently in Ghālib's poetry. A few examples: Q IV, Q XXV, Q XIX; IV Nr. 11, Nr. 28, Nr. 37; Nr. 91; Nr. 116; Nr. 213; Nr. 214; U 3, 51, 78; very typical is U 21:

That lament which did not reach the lip becomes a scar of the heart, that droplet which did not become an ocean is the food of the dust.

سین دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا دئا

18. Mr. Dard uses the same image, Divān-i Fārsī p. 17, (cf. Urdu Divān p. 131): The cauterisation marks have turned me into a cypress of fire-work (or: illumination). Cf. also Bedil, Divān, 191: Ghālib loves the expression chīrāghīn; cf. U 187; the sighs which he heaves with 'sparkling breath' shall turn into a firework:

بهر گرُمَ ناهای خوش بر یکی نفیس مدت هولع سپر چراگان کُل‌هوریه

or IV Nr. 256:

با هر یکی از خشکی او نادین تیم می‌ترسی، نزد شیر چراگان کُل‌هوریه

19. The connection with the moth is found in IV Nr. 309 and U 66; in this verse Ghālib complains that his sparkling remains unknown to the world:

We are the firework (or: illumination) of the bedchamber of the moth's heart.

باریندین یک چیپه متنگان، پدیدن چین

20. Edna St. Vincent Millay, Collected Lyrics, New York 1969 (paperback), p. 95. Kamāl ud-Dīn ad-Dāmīrī, Ḥā’īr al-ḥayawān al-kubrā, Cairo 3 1956, Vol. I. p. 515, says that the salamander is, according to Ibn Sīda, "a creeping animal known among the Indians and Chinese." His information is correct so far as poetical expression is concerned, though not from the scientific viewpoint. In any case, the majority of Persian writing poets in the Middle Ages regarded the salamander as a bird, probably confusing it with the Phoenix. Examples are found in abundance in Rūmī's lyrics, cf. A. Schimmel, Die Bilder sprache Dschelaluddin Rumi, p. 44; several examples in Sulaym Valad, Valadndn, Sd.tii, Bstdn, p. 109, and often. For the relation of the fiery salamander to hot Hindustan cf. Fānī, Divān p. 91, who says:

So much blossom the rose of fire from the water and sall of Hind, everyone who comes to Hindustan becomes a salamander.

21. Other salamanders in Ghālib's poems: Q XXIV: his hot breath casts fire into the nostrils of the salamander;
"A Dance of Sparks"


Cf. U 126:

جلب نار آتش دوزی هزارا دل سی
فتها، شربات کسی که می گوییم می

Divān-i Shams-i Tabrizi Nr. XXXII.2. (Divān-i Kabir Nr. 1690. Cf. also Yahyā ibn Muṣṭafī [d. 872]: "If they would give me Hell I would never burn a lover in it, since love has already burnt him a hundred times" (*Aṭṭār, Tadhkīrat al-a’ālāt*, 1 p. 301).

Cf. Q. XVII; IV Nr. 175; Nr. 298; R 9.

The famous example by Ibn al-Khawāṣṣ in Abū Nuṣairī, *Hilyat al-a’īṣā* Vol. X p. 364.—Tūbī-i Amlī makes from the fire of his heart a hot bath in his eyes (*Divān*, ghazal Nr. 316); Kalim likes the confrontation of fire-sights and torrent-tears (*Divān*, ghazal Nr. 6, Nr. 173); Mir Dard takes up a very traditional idea in his verses (*Divān-i Fāzī*, p. 65):

_The torrent of the hot tears has all my limbs_ —or Dard—partly inundated and partly burnt.

Dard, too, has connected the burning of love with the deluge that destroys his house, *Urdu Divān* p. 117.

In Ghiyāth’s Persian *Divān* : IV Nr. 13, Nr. 48; N4. 51; Nr. 132; Nr. 147; Nr. 306; Nr. 331.

About the ash-house and related ideas see H. Grotzfeld, *Das Bad im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter*, Wiesbaden 1970. Külhanbeyi, i.e. 'the man of the ash-house' means in Turkish generally 'a rough, a rowdy, a dissolute person'.—A connection of qulṭāna and qulṭāna is found as early as in Khaqānī’s poetry (perhaps even earlier); he speaks in a qāṣida (*Divān* p. 318) of 'the fly in the rose-garden, the Phoenix in the ash-house' to denote the wrong state of things. Rūmī sings (*Divān-i Kabir* Nr. 2526):

_I said to the rose-twig: 'Why do you dance in this ash-house? Enter the soul’s garden, look at fresh buds and twigs'._

Cf. also Kalim, *Divān*, ghazal Nr. 98, Nr. 106.

Yunus Ente Divān, ed. A. Güpinili, Istanbul 1943; p. 428.

Khaqānī, *Divān*, ghazal p. 645. Mir Dard often speaks of the candle in similar connections, thus Divān-Fāzī:

_In this desolate banquet one has, from the beginning to the time of death, to live like a candle, equally laughing and weeping._

Dard’s contemporary Hāzin, who came to India as an unhappy refugee, uses a fine image to show the contrast between the radiant beloved and the hopeless lover; he has modelled his verse in accordance with a rhetorical question which
was repeated, from the 13th century onward, by almost every Persian writing poet in India:

O you with silver body—the candle of whose bedchamber have you been?
If am burnt—whose niche did you decorate?

The idea that the beloved fills someone else’s room with the splendour of his beauty makes the jealous lover burn and melt as though he were a candle. (AP p.275)—For Ghalib cf. Q XIX; IV Nr. 22; Nr. 225; other combinations U 143; 155; Q XIV; IV Nr. 6 (the “painted candle” Nr. 97; Nr. 254; Nr. 39; Nr. 255.

Cf. Tālib-i ‘Ammul:
I was mistaken, I am a flame-bearing tongue.
For I am a candle, I can not stand silence.
(Anthology K. A. Rashid, p. 63); Ghant says likewise (Kashmir II 976)

We bow by the tongue that we are alive.

| A DANCE OF SPARKS |

The image occurs very often in Dard’s poetry and prose; he connects it with the “morning of old age” (Divān-i Fārs, Ṣūbā, p. 101-102; cf. id. p. 16); he teaches: to be silent when the morning of old age comes, for the candle is silent when drawn near. And he speaks likewise of those endowed with the capacity of speech comparing them to candles which are bound to be radiant, for:
The glory of the possessor of a tongue” (i.e. poets and speakers) is the word: the silent candle is black-faced (e.g. dishonoured),


| A DANCE OF SPARKS |

He also complains that we are the silent candle of our own dark abode

روى سهیل شوشین ز خوب م هم ته پیده ایم شمع عظیم کلیه نار دخور میا
(IV Nr. 12), that means utterly helpless and useless.

Cf. the famous line U 94 according to which The fumes of life and the chains of grief are essentially one—Could one find rescue from grief before one’s death?

قید جاهت و به لرهم دیل و در کهی ایک کہ
مرت یں چوپی آمی شمع سب سے نوجوان کہ

Cf. Kālīm, Divān, ghazal Nr. 89; the caravan of the candles will go toward annihilation at daybreak.


Sūbā (Kashmir II 604). Kālīm speaks of his state as having The soul on the lip (i.e. on the point of dying), the head on the palm of the hand;
I am the morning candle; I do not need an executioner.

در ئی اسی کر جا سے جا نہ یا
شمع سب سے نوجوان جاہت دنام
i.e. I shall be extinguished soon, and nobody need cut my wick (i.e. cut my neck).

Divān, ghazal Nr. 442. Cf. Ghalib IV Nr. 161; Q IV.

Some more examples of the ‘candle of the tomb’ from Ghalib: IV Nr. 9; Nr. 22; Nr. 192; Nr. 278. In IV Nr. 75 he speaks of the soul which came like a moth of the tomb’s candle a hundred times, seduced by the manifestation of the murderer.

هی قرب اثر جلوة قاتل صد بار
جان یہ رواجی شمع سب سے نوجوان

Cf. also the sbrāgh-i mazār in tarkish-band II.

Smoke: Q VII: Q XVII: Q XXXVI: IV Nr. 11; 288; U 155; in U 28 the poet calls himself ‘the addict of the smoke of the candle’ i.e. a person who remains awake at night.

Comparison of the heaven or the world with smoke: IV Nr. 131; Nr. 214; Nr. 228. The ‘smoke of the sigh’ Q XLIX.

Cf. J. van Ess, The logical structure of Islamic Philosophy, in: Logic in Classical Islamic Culture, ed. by E. G. von Grunebaum, Wiesbaden 1970, p. 26; smoke was the example of the relation of the dahl to the madal, e.g. the fire.

Already *UrT had compared the black book of the sinners at Doomsday to the lover’s house of mourning which is covered with black soot from the smoke of his burning heart, Kalīyāt, qàṣida p. 187:

ًای کہ داڑی نامہ اس ما از فتل زشت
ہوئ سبیلی خاتما علی شمع دیل سیاہ

For similar metaphors cf. IV Nr. 59; Nr. 67; Nr. 136.

A verse with similar imagery opens the manqahāt-i Haidari, U p.189:

ساز یک فه یک نور یک نور چرخ کر
سای ادا نم داغ مو پیدای یہ پر

For similar figures cf. IV Nr. 59; Nr. 67; Nr. 136. A verse with similar imagery opens the manqahāt-i Haidari, U p.189:
A DANCE IN CHAINS

GHÂLÏB AND THE TRADITION OF HALLÂJ

"Atâr tells us in the Tadhkîrât al-auliya, relying on Arabic sources, that the martyr-mystic Hallaj danced in his chains when he was led to the gallows, reciting a quatrain about the wine of love and the cruel beloved. This 'dance in chains' or 'on the gallows' which so excellently symbolizes the state of the suffering lover was adopted by many poets in Iran and became soon a topos throughout the Persian speaking world—La9 Shâhîzâ of Sehwân in Sind, a 13th century mystic, signs a ghâzal ending with the words... and I dance on the gallows, and his contemporary Sa'oî of Shiraz coines the lovely phrase:

Lover is he who, without himself, out of delight of the samâ, comes dancing before the sword of affliction.6

The story of Hallaj's suffering was transformed into one of the most frequently used symbols in Persian, Turkish and Urdu literature, not to mention Sindhi, Punjabi and Pashto folk poetry. The great mystic is praised as the 'martyr of love' par excellence, who was doomed to die since the jealous theologians would not permit him the public utterance of the secret of his Divine love by proclaiming Anî l-haqq, I am the Creative Truth—often translated as I am God (Haqq is one of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah, and became a general expression for 'God' among many of the later mystics). Even Hallaj's contemporaries on the mystical path thought that such a divulgence of the secret of love was liable to punishment: That not only problems of mystical theology were responsible for Hallaj's imprisonment and final execution in 922 but that his process was conducted for certain social and political reasons, was, of course, overlooked by the later mystics whose interpretations of Hallaj's ideas rarely conform to his original teachings. His words "I am the Creative Truth"—not an ecstatic exclamation but the quintessence of his mystical thought—were interpreted as testimony of the Unity of Being, and he was considered by many as a typical pantheist. But nothing could be farther from the truth. To be sure, we must admit that most of those poets who talked about 'Ma'âsîr'—as he is usually mentioned with his father's name—were seldom aware of the historical facts underlying his story and they used his name in much the same way as they used the names of legendary heroes, such as Majnûn, the demented lover, or Farhâd, the luckless worshipper of the princess Shirin. A typical combination of this kind is found in Ghâlib's verse:

The trial of Qâis (=Majnûn) and Kuhkan (=Farhâd) is in the stature and the tresses (of the beloved); where we are, there is the trial of the gallows and the rope.

This is a clever pun, as the erect stature corresponds to the high gallows and the tresses, to the rope. What Ghâlib intends is that Majnûn and Farhâd were concerned only with the outward manifestation of their beloved, whereas the real lover—like Hallaj and his 'disciple' Ghâlib—prefers another type of love, the sort that eventually results in punishment and death.

The expression dâr u rasan, 'gallows and rope', has become almost proverbial in post-Ghâlibian poetry, though Ghâlib is by no means the first poet to use this combination. It is also found in his qaṣîda on God's Unity where he speaks of the Lord,

Who has kept the lovers in the station of gallows and rope, and has cast the heroes in the meeting-place of sword and spear—

The 'heroes' intended here are, as always in combinations such as this, the martyrs of the battle of Kerbela, namely Muslim, the Prophet's grandson, and his family, who were killed in combat on the tenth of Muharram (October 10) 680.6

The expression dâr u rasan has become a topos in post Ghâlibian Indo-Muslim poetry. But a Persian verse by Ghâlib which contains another traditional juxtaposition, to wit: 'gallows'—'minbar', has even
more become part and parcel of everyday speech among the Muslims of India and Pakistan:

_That secret which is hidden in the breast is not a sermon_—
you can utter it on the gallows, but you cannot utter it on the pulpit.

آن وان که در سیستھ ہیست نه وعظ است
براد توان گفت و به سبیر توان گفت

This verse contains an allusion to the fate of Ḥallāj who was accused of divulging the secret of loving union between man and God. As such it is one of the traditional juxtapositions of Maṅsūr, the lover, and the dry-as-dust theologians and preachers who would never allow the lover to express his love and his yearning for union, let alone the mystery of union with the Beloved.

Ghālib is only one poet in the long procession of poets who have used the name of Maṅsūr in their poetry. Ḥallāj’s fate and his tragic figure has frustrated the imagination of more poets than any other historical personality of Islam. After his execution, his words were recorded and preserved by some of his devotees, especially in the Persian speaking areas, particularly in the school of Shiraz as inaugurated by Ibn Khaṣīfī, the last mystic to visit Ḥallāj in prison in 922. Aīnul Ḍaṭā Hamadānī who was executed in the year 1132, and thus resembles Ḥallāj, cited some of his sayings in his books; Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shiraz (d. 1209) not only commented upon his Kitāb al-tawāṣin but collected material concerning his life and work. It is he to whom we owe the preservation and explanation of most of Ḥallāj’s sayings. At the same time the Ḥallājīan renaissance found its most prominent representative in “Aṭṭār. He was spiritually affiliated to the martyr-mystic of Baghdad and believed “that the same fire which had fallen into Maṅsūr’s soul had also touched him”. It is therefore only logical that later Sindhi folk poetry mentions Ḥallāj and “Aṭṭār together as two symbols of the sad truth that the Divine Beloved showers afflictions upon his friends and kills them.” “Aṭṭār’s Persian biography of Ḥallāj in the Tadbīr al-a‘līyā has furnished the poets of the following centuries with all those details which are alluded to in the poetry sung between Istanbul and Delī; his lyrical work similarly contains some references to the martyr-mystic.

From “Aṭṭār the tradition goes on to Jalāluddin Rūmī who not only alludes to Ḥallāj several times but also poetically commented upon his Anā’l-haqq. In his Ma‘lūnawi he compared the state of the mystic to that of iron cast into the fire—the iron, thereupon, calls out “I am the fire” because it feels united with the latter although its own substance is still maintained (an interpretation of mystical union which is also common in Christian and Hindu mysticism). And as Rūmī’s Ma‘lūnawi influenced literature and mystical thought wherever Persian was read, many a poet paraphrased his words about Maṅsūr in the same way as Rūmī had composed poetical variations of the Ānā’l-haqq and of Ḥallāj’s famous qaṣīda waqūla—

_Kill me, o my friends—_
_for in my being killed there is my life_.

From Rūmī, the Ḥallājīan tradition in Turkish literature continues onto the order of the Whirling Dervishes in Anatolia and from them in modern Turkish poetry. However, an even stronger predilection for Ḥallāj is found among the popular Turkish mystics some of whom even have, like him, ‘performed their ablation with their own blood’. The most outstanding poets in this tradition are Nesīmi, the enthusiastic Ḥurūfī poet (fayad alive in Aleppo 1417), and Pīr Sulṭān Abdāl (hanged in approximately 1560 in Sivas). In the rustic order of the Bektāshis the central room in the convent, where the disciple was to swear allegiance to the mystical leader, was called dār-i Maṅsūr, ‘the galleries of Maṅsūr’, since there the neophyte was to be slain to his lower instincts and to worldly lust. Ḥallāj’s name was, and still is, also associated with the guild of the cotton-carders (‘cotton carder’ is the meaning of the Arabic word Ḥallāj), and he has become just as stereotyped a figure in Turkish poetry as he has in Indo-Muslim literature.

It is only natural that the great Ṣufī orders should have discussed the question of Ḥallāj, although their leaders were often quite reluctant in vouching for his orthodoxy. The Naqshbandiya order was very critical of him, comparing him to a narrow vessel which could not contain the mystery of Divine truth and love; his clamour produced by his illicit intoxication ‘broke the vessel’, i.e., resulted in his execution. He is described, among these groups, as having stopped at a comparatively low stage of mystical experience, for his Ānā’l-haqq was interpreted as ‘unity of Being’ which the Naqshbandis consider as only a passing stage of ‘intoxication’ compared to their own experience of ‘unity of vision’. 
The secret of anāʾ-il-haqq is visible from bang, for every leaf of it has the shape of the word Allah.\textsuperscript{21}

The intoxication caused by bang ( hemp) and the 'intoxicated' state of Manṣūr in which he uttered, allegedly, his word “I am God” are here cleverly connected. Faidž mentions Hallāj in his verses,\textsuperscript{22} but even stronger is the tendency of playing with his name in ʿUrfi’s poems. In his quatrains he asks where the true religion, and true love, have remained, and believes that besides the anāʾ-il-haqq there are still hundreds of other secrets in Manṣūr’s heart.

And following the example of many other poets he feels like a successor of Hallāj, dreaming of gallows and rope:

\textit{I do not know the shape of the rosary, nor the figure of the niche for prayer;}

I am intoxicated by thinking of the gallows and the thought of the rope.

This verse with its fine laff u nasrī rosary—rope, mihrāb—gallows shows that ʿUrfi belongs to those who have presigured Ghalīb’s verse of the dār u rasan. In his great qaṣīda on Unity, so skilfully imitated by Ghalīb, ʿUrfit speaks of God who has given contradictory orders in the way of love: law teaches man to be silent, whereas love forces him to divulge the secret;

the mystic thus lives in the constant tension between prudence and enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{23} Ghalīb takes up this motif in a very similar way. The poets at the Mughal court have continued the tradition of using the figure of Hallāj in various images: faithful to the imagery set by Rūmī they might see the roses as “hundreds of heads of Manṣūr on the gallows while the nightingale sings anāʾ-il-haqq (Talib-i Amuli)
or they might contrast the word hadq ‘Truth’, but also ‘reality’ with bāṭil ‘non-valid’. That is how Naṣīrī speaks of Ḥallaj, and it is he who speaks of Maḥṣūr’s dance in his prison: here is one of the roots of Ḥallaj’s imagery.

_The sober people set upright the gallows—_
_In intoxication, Maḥṣūr, dance in the prison!_

In Šāhī’s (d. 1671) and Abū Ṭalib Kalīm’s (d. 1651) poetry the image is not lacking either; Kalīm plays once with the proper meaning of Ḥallaj’s name, e.g., cotton carder, and regrets that the “bow of Ḥallaj” (as it is used in carding the wool or cotton), has long since been out of use.28 That the minor poets of the Mughal court, and those who were connected in any way with the Persian tradition, were fully aware of the possibilities of nice word plays with Maḥṣūr and Ḥallaj goes without saying.29 It is natural that Ḥallaj’s figure was particularly important in the circle around Dārū Shikoh, and Sarmad’s verse pertaining to his execution has often been quoted:

_It is a life that Maḥṣūr’s voice became old:_
_I give new life to gallows and rope._

Fāni Kashmirī, though a rather mediocre poet from this circle, has added to the inherited imagery a few new variants, thus the verse:

_As much as Maḥṣūr is inclined to high flight,_
_Love draws eventually the moth upon the gallows of the candle._

Since Ḥallaj had for the first time used the allegory of moth and candle in his kitāb aq–jawāsin this image is particularly fitting. Ḥallaj is being educated “by the wooden stick of the gallows”, for he had proclaimed the secret of union out of lack of etiquette: 27 or else the gallows are the rod which helps the mystic climbing up the steep roads of love.28 Fāni may also call the gallows a date-palm on which the head of Maḥṣūr is the fruit.29

Ghālib’s verse that every drop exclaims anūl-baḥr, or every atom says ‘I am the sun’ was, again, prefigured in the very first verses of Ghanīmat Kunjālī’s (d. 1695) Mainwālī nayand-i ʿishq.30 The two latest masters of the sabk-i Hindi, Naṣīr Ṭalī Ṣirhindī (d. 1697) and Mirzā Bedī (d. 1721) were fully aware of the Ḥallajān tradition. Naṣīr Ṭalī, in his late days a member of the Naṣīrbandī ṣarīṣa, and a friend of Saʿduʾullāh Gulshan (d. 1728) who was instrumental in attracting Wali Deccani to Delhi has not hesitated to use the traditional motif notwithstanding the aversion of most Naṣīrbandī mystics toward Ḥallaj. In a beautiful line he says:

_Maḥṣūr became dust, but the complaining call anūl-haqq has not disappeared:_
_That flute was burnt, but on the lips of the flute-player there is still the same sound._

The elegant combination of the figure of Ḥallaj, into whom God breathed and who thus was able to speak of union with the motif of the flute, known to Islamic mystics from the very first line of Rūmi’s Mathnawī, shows Naṣīr Ṭalī’s poetical talent very well; and although the flute, annihilated by the fire of love of which Rūmi speaks, may have disappeared from this world, the great musician of God, who spoke the word of love and union, e.g., God, is as He was in eternity.

The use of the Ḥallaj tradition by Bedī would deserve a detailed study; the idea of the tumulkharf, the vessel which is too small and too shallow to contain the Truth, is repeatedly used in his verses.31 He is also fond of expressions connected with the ‘cotton of Maḥṣūr’, which may manifest itself in his white hair.32 Bedī speaks of the dance in prison, following Naṣīrī’s example, of the candle, as did Fāni,34 and like him he uses the equation ‘palm-tree-gallows’.35 This latter motif is, then, cleverly connected with the revelation on Sinai in Wadi Aīmanū:

_In this valley the dust of “I am the Love” is not sound,_
_When I put fire into myself, I am my own palm-tree of the Valley of Aīman._

درین وادی ندارد علاین کرد اتای مشق
آگ آتش زمین در خوشش نخل ایمن خویشم

A dance in chains
Generally Bedil follows the tradition, but twists the meaning often in such a way that one can discover the original connotation only with difficulties.

The Urdu poets who lived in the environment of Nasir al-Ali, Bedil, and the great masters of Delhi took over the symbolism of Hallaj, of gallows and rope; whether we think of Mir who uses the same palm trees, and the same ‘wine of Mansur’, or of Sauda. A particularly interesting instance is found in the Na’la-yi ‘Anadalib by Mir Dard’s father and mystical master Nasir Muhammad ‘Anadalib (d. 1758) who describes in most lovely details (Vol. I, p. 132) how a gazelle entered a garden and fell in love with the gardener; the animals gathered around the graceful animal and asked what lovely fruits and odoriferous herbs she had brought for them; but the poor gazelle, enraptured by love, and forgetting the shallowness of her own capacity “began to sing unfitting words”, claiming to be a haywan-i nadiq, an animal endowed with speech and logic, and eventually overwhelmed by the experience of Perfect Beauty she exclaimed “I am the Human Being and 2-l-insan... In this little story Nasir ‘Anadalib has dealt with Hallaj in a very charming way. In another place, he explains the haqq in Hallaj’s claim as being the contrast of bâhil, and since the human soul, though created, is eternal and will not perish after death, a mystic who has reached the state of perfect spirituality may say and2-l-haqq and thus confirm his own spiritual reality without claiming that he is Allah. Does one not say that Paradise is haqq, real? (Vol. I 622).

Since Ghâlib stands in a line with Bedil, Nasir al-Ali, and the Delhi tradition of poetry and, to a certain extent, mysticism, it is small wonder that he has taken up the Hallajian imagery to apply it in a most ingenious way. The idea that the lover must delight in his afflictions constitutes one of his main topics. By means of an expression employed frequently by the folk poets, he speaks of the ‘goblet of Mansur’—a word which reminds the reader of ‘intoxication’ by the wine of love, and he knows that to speak the truth—or to utter the word haqq, ‘Divine Truth’—will indispensably lead man to the gallows, for

the end of those who see One is the gallows.

In his mathnawi that pays homage to the Prophet he has expressed it thus:

Those of this (friends) who sing “He is Truth” are seeking the Unseen,
Those of his singers (who utter) “I am the Truth” speak bitter.

‘Truth’ is always considered ‘bitter’ in Persian poetry, and those who claim to be themselves the Divine Truth must be prepared for yet more bitterness.

Ghâlib, too, follows sometimes the Naqshbandi-Suhrawardi tradition which argues that Mansur was unwise, immature, and narrow in his claim to be one with God—

every drop can claim “I am the ocean!”

but:

Though we know that our drop is essentially the sea,
we do not imitate the ‘shallow-vessellness’ of Mansur—

This verse of his is a strange combination of the view held by the representatives of essential monism and of the criticism set forth by orthodoxy against Hallaj. However, Ghâlib holds that one should not declare the intoxicated lover guilty when he exclaims “I am the Truth”, for this act is nothing other than the manifestation of the Beloved which incites the jealousy of others—

especially of the ‘custodians’, i.e., those entrusted with safeguarding the purity of faith and the fulfilment of religious law; these are responsible for the punishment of a demented and lawless lover and will be re-compensed when they catch the transgressor. Did not Hallaj himself often call the messes to kill them so that they might be recompensed by God for their pious and law-bound action? The orthodox are portrayed in Ghâlib’s poetry as watchmen who must discharge their
duty in the night:

_The voice of the law is higher than Mansūr’s head —
the complaint of our night-watchman results from
our nocturnal ramblings._

آوازة شرع آز سر مصور بند ست
از شرب رئی ساتن شکو عسس ما

It is—as Ghālib puts it in a slightly extravagant verse—the fascinating
sound of Divine Beauty which ‘has thrown the ring of desire into the
ear of Mansūr’s blood’, i.e., has made his blood desireous to become
His servant (the meaning of ‘having a ring in one’s ear’).

وقت كار ان جنس خلخل كالندساق تيبت
اللهة رغبت به كريش جون مصور كند

In this verse Divine Beauty is compared to the sound of the ring which
adorns the ankle of the beloved; the ‘footing’ in the first hemistich
corresponds to the ‘earring’ in the second one, so that the formal
connection is perfected.

Jalāludīn Rūmī had once confronted, in a famous and oft
quoted passage of his _Mathnawi_, the spiritual state of Pharaoh who
exclaimed “I am your Highest Lord” (Sura 79/24) and that of Ḥallāj
who said “I am the Truth”. In the first case that ‘I’ became a curse for
the speaker for he spoke out of himself, in the second case it was Divine
grace. Ghālib, in his turn, invents a parallelism between the Divine
address to Moses “I am God” which ‘made the bush a-speaking’ and
Ḥallāj’s word which ‘brings a man to the gallow’s’:

هم انن اتت خووان درخت را ببختر آورد
هم انن الحق گوی سردی را سردار آورد

He can continue this thought which takes up a comparison very
common among the Sāfī poets in another _ghazal_ from the same late
period of his life:

ز زن تحل انن اتت گوی نا آگ
مجدید چنین که و روسی و عسا گوید
سکر زن من نه بود شرم حق پرستان وا
که نام حق بینند و همین انن گوید

Ghālib has not only altered the Ḥallājīan _anāʾī-bagg_, ‘I am the
Creative Truth’, into the exclamation _anāʾī-bahr_, ‘I am the ocean’,
as uttered by the droplet,

دل هر قطور جه ساز ان اله

or into the exclamation _anāʾī-shārqa_, ‘I am the East’, as uttered by
the light of morning (similar to the introductory lines of Ghanimat’s _nayrang-i ʿishq_)
He even goes so far as to tease his beloved by asking her to declare frankly _anāʾī-ṣawām_, ‘I am the idol’, since his own reli-
gion is far from persecuting infidelity and idol worship...

یی خورید ی با آبا الاب به انا الصم کتا
شیوه گیر و داوندیست در کیش چه کشت ما

Ghālib does not hesitate to call the ‘Mansūr of the
faction of the ʿAlī-ʾlāhī’,

ستور فرخه على اللہ منم
آوازة الانسداد دون اگن

the extremist Shiʿa group who consider ʿAlī, Muḥammad’s cousin
d and son-in-law, a Divine manifestation. The reason for Ghālib’s
claim is that his name Asadullah, is synonymous with the honorific
name of ʿAlī, the ‘Lion of God’; hence, by merely mentioning his own
name, he can exclaim, without exaggeration:

_I am Asadullah (i.e., the Lion of God)_
becoming, thus, ‘the careless Mansūr without gallow’s and without
rope’.

لپش دمت انن استادان ی ب ارج
ستورلا ایی ت ی دار وی رس

Ghālib emphasizes the fact that the gallow’s are by no means a
place for every rogue and highway robber. Quite the contrary,
they are a noble place, and exaltation to them befits the genuine lover.

نه هر چه خوی و رمزن ، به پایی ستور است
بدین حضیر خبیش ز اوج دار چه حرف

This is reminiscent of a word play popular since the days of ʿAṭṭār:
the gallow’s mean, to the lover, ascension toward his beloved (this
saying, beside its deep meaning, furnished the poets with the elegant rhyme Ḥallāj-mi "raj, 'ascension'). For it is the 'longing bent on lofty things' which 'seeks the rank of Manṣūr'.


Ghālib's verse shows that he is well aware of the danger that any rebellious freebooter might try to attain the rank of martyrdom for selfish purposes under some idealistic pretexts. But it is only for the true lover to

Rise up and sing like Manṣūr,
Thrust your existence away!

*Attār had sung long before that he had exclaimed 'I am the Truth' in the Baghdad of pre-eternity. In a similar way Ghālib claims that he knows no fear of the gallows; for in his own world the story of Ḥallāj has not yet been told, and still awaits its realisation in time and space—it is still 'a letter under his lip'.

But Ghālib also contrives to give the tragic motif a witty twist by reproaching the sober writers of theoretical treatises who fail to understand deeper meanings; he says:

O had you pondered that, for killing the deeper meaning with one stroke,
the manifestation of pen and sign may become gallows and rope!

The spell of the Ḥallāj-motif continues, after Ghālib, in Iqbal. It seems that the words dār ū rasān, 'pulpit and gallows' belong to the keywords of Iqbal's interpretation of his admired predecessor in Urdu and Persian poetry; another concept is the fire imagery to which he alludes in his Ḥāvīdnāme. Unless one focusses upon the emphasis laid upon the motif of Ḥallāj by Ghālib, one will barely understand why Iqbal has displayed the figure of Ghālib along with Ḥallāj and Tāhirah, the martyress of Babism, in the 'Heaven of Jupiter', to discuss with them problems of longing and love and prophetology. It appears that he saw in Ghālib the poet of dynamism, a man who had the capacity of expressing the inner movement of life, who knew that to love means to suffer, and moreover to accept suffering gladly. Ghālib and Ḥallāj become, in Iqbal's epic, the representatives of the same world-view, the models of the conflict between dynamic love and tradition-bound theology.

Iqbal's interpretation of Ḥallāj as almost a predecessor of Ghālib and himself has, to a certain extent, influenced modern Urdu poetry. Ghālib's verse on dār ū rasān conveys the necessity of suffering for one's ideals and is therefore used quite successfully even in the writings of the most progressive writers of our day who aim at combating fossilized traditions and established order. A similar development can be witnessed in recent years, in the Arabic countries, where Ḥallāj has come to be interpreted as a kind of forerunner of modern socialism (thus Salīh ʻAbduṣ Šābūr, Bayātī, etc.).
FOOTNOTES

1 L. Massignon, La Passión d'el-Hallaj, Paris 1922; a good English account of Hallaj's life and death in Ernst Schröder, Muhammad's People Portland/Maine 1993.

2 Abūl-Hallaj, ed. by L. Massignon et Paul Kraus, Paris 3 1957, ch. 16, and Ḍīvān, naskh and réédition par L. Massignon, J.A. 1931, Sect. 1 b, Nr. 37.


4 Sa'di, Ghazzalyyār (Kulliyat III), Nr. 289. A lovely verse about the dance on the gallow's rope in Rūmī, Ḍīvān-i Kāyāf Nr. 2365.


6 The combination of the name of Ḥusain ibn Mansūr al-Hallaj with that of Ḥusain ibn ʿAlī provided the poets with a fine pun on the name of Ḥusain, common to both martyrs, cf. ʿAṭṭār, Ḍīvān Nr. 109. This combination was used-by a number of Bekhtush poets in Turkey, and is also found in later Persian poetry, e.g. see the quotation in Nāṣir-i Ṭabarī II 40.

7 Manuchohr as quoted by A-Aufi, Lābīb al-ʿolāmā, II p. 55; Sanāī, Fadīqūt al-baqāqa, ed. M. Ṣirāzī, Tehran 1950, p. 100; Aʿṭṭār, Ḍīvān gazal Nr. 257; 368; 407; Rūmī Ḍīvān-i Kāyāf Nr. 1374.

8 About the ʿīḥāʿ as-ṣūr, the divagation of the secret, cf. Ghiyāsh IV Nr. 109; Q XVIII.


10 Ṣadūqīn Baqālī, Ṣadīq-i Ṣadūqī, ed. H. Korbin, Tehran-Paris 1966; the best introduction to Ḥallaj's thought.


13 Rūmī, Mathnawī V 2536: the comparison between Ḥallaj and Ḥārān, which goes back to ʿHallaj's kiāb al-tawwāmah, Ch. VI 20 ff., is elaborated Mathnawī II 305 ff.; II 2522; V 2035 ff.


15 The qaṣīda ʿuqdatān, 'Kill me, o my faithful friends!' (Ḥallaj, Ḍīvān, ed. L. Massignon, qasīda Nr. 10) is used by Rūmī in the Mathnawī T 3934 ff.; II 3836 ff.; id. 4186 ff.; IV 1 106 ff.; V 2675; V 4062; Ḍīvān Kāyāf Nr. 2813 and afte—Cf. Sahlān, Mathnawī-i Ḍīvān-i Ashkār, p. 191, and id. ʾIrāqī i kāfām, ed. Mu'īn ʾḤakim Muḥammad ʿAbd Rānūpū, Karachi 1959, p. 239.


17 Aʿṭṭār sometimes proclaims this idea (see Ḍīvān, qasīda II 16). It is also found in Rūmī, Mathnawī III 690 ff., and becomes popular from the late 13th century onward (Yunus Emre in Turkey, and all the subsequent mystical poets who wrote in Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Sindhi and Panjabi).


21 Islamic Culture, Hyderabad, XXVII, p. 174.
POETRY AND CALLIGRAPHY

ASPECTS DRAWN FROM THE WORK OF MIRZĀ GHĀLIB

In May 1969, the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University inaugurated an exhibition of Persian and Arabic calligraphy as a tribute to Mirzā Asadullah Ghālib the centenary of whose death was celebrated, in that year, all over the world. It seemed to us meaningful to connect the memory of the great poet of Indo-Pakistan with the art of writing and calligraphy, for there is scarcely another poet who was such a devoted letter-writer; and the number of images in his poetical work taken from the art of writing, from calligraphy and letters, is quite remarkable. Ghālib was by no means the first to use these similes and images; it is well-known that the symbolism of letters, playing either on the shape or on the hidden meaning (or both) of the letters of the Arabic alphabet is one of the most cherished traditions of Arabic poetry since the Jāhiliyya, and was elaborated in Persian and inherited by Persian-influenced languages. Ghālib stands in this respect, as in his whole use of metaphors, at the end of a tradition which goes back far more than a millennium. But so far as I can judge no other poet before him had the courage to open a divān with a line like this:

The picture—of the impudence of whose writing does it complain?

From paper is the shir of every written form!

Khusrau (d. 1325) has put it very charmingly:

In my paper-shirt I am due to you
like the picture of the crescent moon on the calender—

ُسم دو کاغذ یزن پیراهن از تو
چو نتش سا نب ره روی تقویم

that means, as weak and lean as the new moon. Auhadī Marāghi and Ḥāfīz likewise speak of the ‘paper-shirt’, the dress of complaint. The image is—as a good metaphor should be—absolutely correct: could a letter be visible without being on paper? Paper is the essential ‘garment’ for everything written or painted; hence every painting wears the ‘garb of the petitioner’. That means, for Ghālib, that everything written complains of the hand of the master calligrapher: “Why did you write me this way? Why did you connect me with those letters? Why did you write me at all? Probably only in order to show your power and strength, your skill and the beauty of your hand, without considering how much the letter, the picture will have to suffer after you have put away the pen and its fate can no more be altered...”

The classical Islamic ideas of the ‘writing of destiny’, of the sarniwš, ‘fate’, the fear that ‘the Pen has already dried up’ (gad jaffa‘-l-qalam) —all these lie behind Ghālib’s transparent verse which is, indeed, a concise description of human life in almost classical and yet ‘expressionist’ terminology.

Ghālib has used the expression ‘paper-shirt’ once more in a Persian mañqibat where he compares himself to the shadow and the flame which is nourished by smoke and scars, and continues:

I put on a dark blue dress and make a paper-shirt:
sometimes mourning for knowledge, sometimes longing for justice.

کہو پوشمش و قطعات پیرمان سام
کہو تو نمی دانش، کہو بیعت داد

The idea of the ‘writing of destiny’, so dear to Persian and Turkish poets, has been expressed by Ghālib in a charming way when he asks:

Why should I not be disaffected against the way
and customs of meritory works?

The pen of my fate has been cut in a crooked way!—

هومن محرح نه کیوں رہ و رسم لقاب سپ
پیژ ز ہا تا بن مئی یام شمس کو
The beauty of the writing depends, as it is well-known, largely upon how the reed-pen is cut.8 The complaint about the cruel fate makes Ghâlib say in a slightly joking manner :

*Destiny wanted that I should be ‘ruined by the wine of friendship’ (ruined = completely drunk); but the pen wrote only ‘ruined’ and did not go further ...*

Thus, there is no ‘wine of friendship’ allotted to him.

The poet may also joke about the concept of *sarniwhst*, ‘fate’, lit. ‘what is written on the forehead’9 for what else could his *sarniwhst* be if not the mark of constant prostration performed on the threshold of the beloved idol?

One should add that the dark mark on the forehead, caused by constant prostration during the ritual prayers, is regarded as a sign of special piety among the Muslims (cf. Sura 48:29).

Hundreds of poets have thought of the Book of Deeds which will be opened at Doomsday,10 and have compared the face or the tresses of their beloved to that very book. Ghâlib follows them, explaining in a traditional phrase :

*Your face is as white as the page written by your right hand,*
*Your hair is as black as the book written by my left hand!*

Faith and unbelief, pious actions and sins, the radiant whiteness of the book which is given in the right hand of the faithful whose faces shall be shining white, and the blackness of the book which is given in the left hand of the black-faced sinners are all present for him when he looks at the beauty of his beloved.11

More frequent in Ghâlib’s verses, however, than images taken from Qur’anic sources as they were current among the poets for centuries are allusions to the act of writing proper. The ink which flows on the paper when he starts writing and forms a blot becomes a symbol of the black nights of separation which his black fate has destined for him.

*Siyahe Ghâbi ke farukh da man khazir kagaz par sari qism is sahih tumhe shahin mehran ki*

He may consider the blackish smoke of the dying candle to be a sign of mourning for the deceased poet, or see on the black face of his notebook that :

*Speech has put on a black garment because of the death of the eloquent.*

(‘sahasra jagi sad-e seytiha gilai)

*Sann baram saxen re sahe boos aad*

Like his predecessors, he plays with the word *khatt*, denoting both ‘script’ and the ‘down’ of the beloved which grows on the paper on which nothing had been written before, viz. on the immaculate white face of the young man, on which the fresh down looks like lines of black ink on a white piece of paper.

*Khat unbar shah kah zaf ko koof not ebad
Yek naam sanawon ho joro kekh pahin ki kih*

When he says that his *heart has become illuminated by the book of the beloved.*

*Roshn sad-e khub kash khash eim*

he contrasts very well the *sawâdnâmâ*, the ‘black’ writing, with the idea of illumination. In this state he feels like a king; for the pigeon, carrier of letters, looks to him like the Humâ whose shadow raises man to royal honour—touched by the wing of the pigeon which brings a letter from the beloved, the lover is happier than any king in the world can be :

*What comes not from the Humâ I expected from the pigeon*

*Tameh zamini dadh munaw wahe daki dast
Aanhe nauid az haq jashm az kibar dastem*

since
the letter of the lovely beloved is something,
and the royal title something else.
The connection of the Humâ with the art of writing is also found in another verse of Ghâlib's, a line in which his poetical exaggeration reaches once more an apex:

The meaning and distress which appear in the way of love—
write them down with the ink made of the shadow of the Humâ's wing.

It is a beautiful though unusual idea that out of the very shadow which can transform an ordinary human being into a king the poet should distill ink to write how distressed he has been rendered by love. Both the shadow and the ink are black; Ghâlib has compared the shadow of the Humâ's wing once to black smoke,

سماهم اگر پرورانی فیش اپنی شو
سایه هجوم دود با سیرود از بال سا

and in old times the best ink was prepared on the basis of lampblack. No image could better describe the state of the lover than this comparison—for him, the deepest distress and abjection which he finds in the way of love is still much higher than kingship bestowed by the Humâ's wing.

Apparently, Ghâlib's ink was of a very peculiar character: when the look of his beloved falls upon his letter full of fidelity, the ink immediately springs out of the paper and becomes antimony for her lovely eyes which have been kind enough to look once at the letter, and therefore deserve to be embellished and brightened:

کمکش اگر برس تاج با زکاده چروپا ورد
سوار سفه ز کاغذ جو پت با ورد

In exuberant self-praise, again, our poet may utter the wish that his ink should be made of pulverized musk, whereas the inkpot should be the navel of the Khotanese musk deer, full of fragrance,

هم سوار سفه سک سوده خواهد بخشن
هم دوا تم تاث آهوى ختن خواهند شدن

a hope which he expressed in connection with the idea that his star of fame which is still in the nadir of Not-Being will rise one day among the people of the world.

Numerous are Ghâlib's poems about 'paper' and 'pen'. Faithful to the poetical tradition he has described his marvellous pen in glowing words: it may speak with Solomon about the devil and may pour sugar in the way of the ant, and if it were close to Zulaikhâ it would certainly draw a sketch for her painted castle...

با زیبا آگر شود همراه
طرح کاخ سحر اندوز

He is not the only poet, in fact, who thinks that the sound of his pen can rob someone's reason so that that person will no longer enjoy the song of the nightingales;

آنا که صبیق قلم هوش راپید
دبکر دم بدوق ز آواز عادل

other poets before him had already compared the reed-pen to the immortal Khîrât and the black ink to the water of life which is hidden in a dark valley, or to the Virgin Mary giving birth to the—likewise immortal—Jesus, or else had heard in the scratching of their pens the song of Sarosh, the angel of inspiration, as Ghâlib does in the closing line of one of his finest Urdu ghazels.

آین می غیب یسی به مثبت خیال می
غالب صبیق قلم ای واری روشن کی

When Häfiz makes dance the Messiah with Venus (Zubarah) at the sound of his pen, Ghâlib's musical pen induces even the ninth heaven into dance, the messiah being an inhabitant of the fourth sphere only:

آنم که درین یزرم صبر قلم من
در رقص در اورده سبیل تاجن را

When his pen moves in the ambush of his thought, angels will become his prey, and Solomon—acquainted with the language of birds—his game:

از جمشید قلم به کیشاک گنگر مین
باشد گرجه صاد و سلمان نکور باد
One may think here of the comparison of the pen with an arrow as used by earlier poets. It seems, however, a genuine Ghalibian idea when the poet asserts, at the end of his introduction to the Persian Divan, that he has selected and put a winehouse beneath each letter of his poems so that the reader can become intoxicated by reading his Divan.

Sometimes he turns to simpler comparisons. In a very special connection with his constant fight for the purity of the Persian language which, according to him, was suffering at the hands of Persian-writing poets of India, he goes back to the imagery of the Shahname:

As long as my pen is in my hand, what shall I fear from the enemy? When Faridun displayed his banner, what fear need be from Zahhak?

His pen is like the banner of Faridun in defeating the intruder into the field of Persian poetry: did he not call his book about the errors of the dictionary Burhan-i Qazi in its second edition Dirafshi Kaviyani, 'The Banner of Kawe' which amounts, historically, to the 'banner of Faridun'.

Ghalib may become more lyrical in the description of his masterly pen and his paper:

From the new and modern picture which Ghalib produced the paper has become completely bound in gratefulness to the pen;

or he may say, in a spring description:

The pen flaunted owing to the movement of the paper like grass from the wind, the paper unfurled itself from the call of the pen like a rose from the morning breeze.

The picture which Ghalib draws with bleeding pen cannot be repeated in the world since it is so fresh and unusual.

Taking over the oft expressed idea that the pen is so hot from love that it would burn the paper whereas the paper is so flooded by tears that it is almost dissolved, Ghalib closes his first great qaṣīda—that wonderful Hymn on Unity—with an allusion to Rumi's Mathnawi:

The sound of my pen burnt the world:

I am Ghalib who has thrown fire from the song of the reed into the reed-bed.

The pen is, of course, made of reed, and thus its association with the reed flute is easy for him like for many Indo-Persian poets who like to allude to Rumi's line at the beginning of the Mathnawi:

Fire is that song of the reed, it is not wind;

I am writing hot words from the burning of my heart, so that nobody can put his finger on my letters!

Ghalib's peculiar charm lies in his fondness to use all of a sudden most serious images and metaphors in a humorous or ironical sense; that is true of his fire-imagery as well:

It is the fire of love which is visible in Ghalib's poetry—an ordinary pen would break when it reaches the word 'love' in writing, as Rumi had said.

Ghalib's peculiar charm lies in his fondness to use all of a sudden most serious images and metaphors in a humorous or ironical sense; that is true of his fire-imagery as well:

Everybody who would like to put his fingers on his verses for the sake of blaming him would immediately get burnt. In another verse he
again indulges in an admirable hyperbole speaking of the fire of his heart; here he connects, once more, smoke and ink:

Since my pen walked so intensely hot (=swift) on the paper, fire sifted out of it;

I prepare now ink from the smoke which every moment comes out from the paper—

ز می تاب حرام کلکم آذر یزرد از کاغذ
ساد انگورم از دودی که هر دم خورد از کاغذ

indeed a most practical way of writing!

Using the traditional imagery of Zoroastrian fire-worship together with his favourite combination 'straw-and-fire' our poet may consider his heart

the object of worship for Zoroaster (=fire), and I gave the spreading of fire to the straw, I mean the pen.

دل می سعید زردشتست، غالب فاشی می گویم
به خس یعنی قلم من داده ام آذر نشان را

And if, on the one hand, his hot sighs and glowing words burn the paper, his tears, on the other hand, drown it and dissolve it: when he wants to commit to paper a complaint about the cruelty of the beloved, the pen becomes like a piece of straw hit by a torrent: it moves without being able to work, and is carried away, eventually, by the floods of tears.

خوانست شکوک بیداد تو انتا کردن
قلم از جویش رد شد خس طولان زده

How often has our poet complained about his sad fate by telling his readers that he writes the story of his madness, or the story of his unfulfilled love, with bleeding fingers, reduced to a stump.

درد دل لکه کب تک چاپ ان کو دکه‌لایان
الکیان فکر انتی، خانه خونکنان انتا

These verses—which contain an elegant pun on qalam, 'pen' and the 'reducing to a stump, cutting' qalam karnā, have inspired the Pakistani painter Sadiqain to some of his exciting illustrations of Ghalib’s Urdu divān.51

There is an expression, common in earlier Indo-Persian poetry, which Ghalib often used and in which his predilection for the writing-imagery is combined with the fire-imagery: it is the ‘firestruck paper’: paper with writing on it, when burnt, will give, for a short while, a certain glitter; the letters will sparkle for a moment owing to the structure of the ink, and the black firemarks, then, look like the cauterisation-mark or wound of which Persian and Urdu poets have so often complained.22 Thus the poet can regard this kind of paper as possessing sparkling mirrors; he can even compare the desert to a sheet of half-burnt paper, since in the footprints the heat of his walking is still visible—so swift, so 'hot' was the movement of his burning feet that it left even the desert, typical abode of the madman, spotted with dark burning-scars.

یک قلم کاغذ آتش زده میں سفرہ دشت
ٹکش یا سسے چب کری یتاریہ هیوز

He may combine it with birds; every handfull of dust is flying toward heaven as a dove (doves being ash-grey), and every piece of firestruck paper becomes the trap for the peacock, for both have the same sparkling marks.

کاف ہر گلابی قلم کے گورون شدہ قوی پرواز
دام هر کاغذ آتش زده طاوس شکار

The association of 'fire-struck paper' and the peacock is found already in 17th century Indo-Persian poetry.23

Thus in a Persian poem Ghalib says quite in harmony with the models of the masters of the Indian style:

The letter-carrier got lost—now I throw the letter in the fire:
if it is not a pigeon I make a peacock fly.

نام ای برم گم در آتش نامزا باز انکم
چون کبکر نسب طاوسی بی پرواز انکم

The pigeon is the usual carrier for letters, but since there is no pigeon available, the fire may turn the letters of his writing into a sparkling pattern like that of a peacock's tail. This verse reminds the reader immediately of a charming Urdu verse

کبکر کا طرح فضولی دیکھ کیسی نہ کاہذ کا با بوب
قسم کہ دیوار اس کافر نہ کاہذ کے چلے چکا کی
in which Ghalib asks how his beloved shall become acquainted with the contents of his love-letter, for—and now there are two possibilities of interpreting the second hemistic—either she has sworn to burn all paper (and then she would not see its contents at all) or, if the oath-particle is taken in the contrary meaning: she has sworn not to burn any paper (and thus she will be deprived of seeing the letters sparkling and revealing the fire of his love).

The latter meaning is confirmed by a Persian verse in which he addresses his beloved:

_Throw it in the fire and regard my fever and fire—what need to open my letter full of grief?_

بفگن درآتیش و تاب و تایم نظره کن غنامه ما بکشودن چه احتیاج

Ghalib writes the 'picture of the eye'—i.e., the letter _šad_ س or _saīn_ ص—on the letterhead so that his longing to behold the face of the beloved may be fulfilled when she opens the letter—

آناکی کی تصویر سرناپی به چشم چن چه که
توجب به کهی جاوی که اس کو حصرت دیداره

a witty idea which has, however, been expressed by Jami who writes his name as _'asīhī_ ًسیحی, so that he can look at the beloved through the eye of the _šad_ when she reads the letter.24

Our poet leaves his house early in the morning to ask a scribe to write a letter to the sweetheart:

_سکر لکويته کوی اس کو خط نو کوهم سی لکویته_ عونی سیح اور کیس چکن کیمی کوی کوی لکوی

How often has Ghalib, himself author of masterly letters in charming and poignant conversational Urdu complained in his verses that his beloved has not written, or will not answer!

However, we should not take this complaint too seriously, because the poets of the Middle East were fond of inserting into their poems lamentations about the faithless beloved who did not write a single line to them: we may think, to mention only the most famous example, of Ḥāfiẓ's _ghazal_ with the opening line:

_It is a long time that the friend has not sent line!_

دیری ست کد دلدار بیانی تن فرستاد
تویست کلایس و سلامی تن فرستاد

We should like to mention here the strange fact that even in the regional literature of Pakistan, especially in Sindhi and Panjabi, the complaint about friends and family-members who do not write letters forms a whole genre of poetry. Here belong the touching verses in Shāh ʿAbdūl Laṭif Bhīta's _Sur Maru_25 where the poor girl waits for a letter from her family (similar to many of bridal songs)26 or the beautiful poems in Sachal Sarmast's Sindhi _risālā_, especially in _Sur Malik._27 This is all the more surprising as the percentage of illiteracy in these parts of the Muslim world was very high, particularly among women. Thus, when Ghalib relates that his beloved does not write, he follows rather a traditional _topos_ than to convey his own experiences.

Yet, he gives even the traditional subject of letter-writing a quite different aspect by his unexpected use of words. Thus he tells with great amazement that at one place of the letter the word _waʃā_ 'fidelity' was written; it was, however, immediately erased—the paper must have been _ghalaṭbardār_ 'uplifter of error' when the beloved wrote her lines.

ایک جا حرف ونا لکیتا تھئہ سوئی سک گئا
ظاہرا کاغذ تربے خط کا غلاف بردار

Ḥāfiẓ thought it necessary to explain this word _ghalaṭbardār_ by saying that 'it is that paper from which the mistake can be very easily removed so that no trace of it remains'.28 Ghalib has used the term very elegantly to convey the idea that the word disappears by itself: even if the beloved had indeed written once the word 'fidelity' the paper is of such a kind that this word, which was not really intended immediately disappeared without leaving any trace.

This lack of fidelity leads the poet also to think that the lover, wherever he should see a gesture of friendliness from the beloved in writing, should write on the side of that paper: 'May my soul be sacrificed for her'.
And could we think of a more charming description of the strange state of a lover than that given in the lines:

*We shall write a letter, even though there be no subject —
we are in love with your name!*

That is the reason for repeating over and over again the name of the sweetheart in the address of otherwise useless and meaningless letters.

But besides these direct references to correspondence we find also other allusions to the writing of letters in his poetry. The poet who complained:

*It is a 'O would that' which I have written in a hundred places!*

could summarize his life in the lines:

*The meaning of the word 'hope' is in no copy, although
I have written the dictionary of the letters of longing.*

perhaps the most ingenious application of the symbolism of letters the like of which can be found only in a truly great poet like Ghâlib.

But Ghâlib was likewise well versed in the art of comparing single letters to other objects, as through the centuries, the *afl* had stood for the slim stature of the beloved and had been the symbol of Divine Unity and incomparability; the *jin*، the *dal*، or the *lam*، had signified curls and tresses, the *sin*، teeth, the * mim*، the small mouth—unless it was connected with the name of Muhammad and speculations about his high rank. This trend to play with the letters of the Arabic alphabet, so typical of Islamic poetry, is not lacking in Ghâlib's verse. A nice instance is the verse about his visit to Lucknow on his journey to Calcutta where he gives the reason for his short stay in the city with the following line:

*Our road is the long-drawing kaf of karam (kindness).*

Waiting for the kindness and favour of the ruler, the poet has very cleverly compared the long stroke of the initial *kaf* at the beginning of
the word karam, ‘kindness’ to the long way on which he travelled

Puns on single letters are generally found in Ghalib's religious

Punish single letters are generally found in Ghalib's religious

19 but quite unusual is Ghalib's idea that

The expression kāf-i karam was not unfamiliar

among the Persian poets; but quite unusual is Ghalib's idea that

even the tyrant is injured by his own tyranny since on the

head of the (word) arra (saw) there is the saw of tashdid—

The lām-ālif 狸 is usually the letter which designates close

relationship, love, and embrace. Thus when Ghalib says that

he had already been absorbed in the lesson of annihilation while

Majnūn was still writing the lām-ālif on the wall of the school

he thinks of the old story, often illustrated in miniatures, how Majnūn

got to school with Laila and was in love with her before he had to

learn the lesson of losing his mind and roaming through the deserts

in hopeless quest for his lost beloved: our poet claims to be much senior to

him in the study of annihilation.21

The lām-ālif may also be compared, in the traditional vein, to

*Allā's mysterious sword Dhul-Fiqār which looks, in representations,

like the word lā-

"Todorrow" designates, based on Qur'ānic expressions, the Day of

Judgment, whereas 'yesterday' is, in the language of Persian poets, the
day of the pre-eternal covenant, the rūz-i alāst when God addressed
the not yet created posterity of Adam: "Alastu birabbikum", "Am I not your Lord?" (Sura 7/171).

That very day the fate of man was fixed, as the poets often maintain: Ghalib's fate was that he should
be involved in the study of the letter mīn, symbolizing the tiny mouth of the beloved, and the letter lām, representing her long tresses; both
letters together, however, read mul, ل, i.e., 'wine' so that the poet's peculiar weakness is also expressed in a subtle allusion.
assenting to the idol-destroying la—
Say Allah, and become the lightning of everything
what is besides Him!

بکو آتے و برق سماو شر

To destroy everything besides God, that is the quality of the prophetic spirit which has found its clearest expression in the Islamic creed, and likewise the ideal of the mystic who sees nothing but Him, marvelling at His Unity and His manifestations in time and space which are real only so long as they depend upon Him.

Thus he may pray:
Erase the picture of duality from the page of my breast,
you whose glance is the alif-i ša‘iqal of our mirror!

عمر کا نقص شدی از ورن سیتہ سا
ای نگاہت الیف میل آئنیہ سا

I.e., the mirror of the heart should be polished by the straight look (hence comparable to the straight alif) of the Lord so that it reflects only the Divine Unity and is purified from the dust and rust of associationism (shirk).

We find the poet further asserting that he has thrown the split of la into the shirt of the directions so that the beloved may proudly wander outside the veil of our imagination,

چاک لا اندر گریبان جھیلوں اکنہ بیم
پی بہت دیون خرام ار بردہ ہندار ما

or he may use the old Ṣūfī expression of the 'broom of the la' 
پوکروہ لا

for sweeping away all signs of duality from the world.

These puns on the letters alif and mim, or the la and ila, filled with religious meaning for every Muslim poet, lead the reader into the wide field of Ghālib's religious ideas. A particularly brilliant example of the use of alif and mim is given in Qaṣīda III. Here Ghālib uses the classical tradition according to which God declared and Ahmad bīla mim, 'I am Ahmad without m'-Aḥmad, 'One', a tradition which was frequently quoted at least since 6 Aṣṭar and Rūmī. He himself has used (in M VI) for this m the expression mim-i inkār, the "m of possibility" or 'of contingent existence', namely the existence of everything created as opposed to the Necessary Existence which belongs to God alone. The m is, thus, the letter of created, i.e., contingent beings, the first of which is Muḥammad.

First one has to take the m from Ahmād;
for the m is the veilekeeper of the essential name of the Prophet.
Whenever haply by the knowledge of the essence of Ahmād
the m disappears from between, and the One (Aḥad) becomes manifest.

See without the veil Allah from the alif manifested,
and from the hā and dāl count and find 8+4=(twelve).

This kind of letter-mysticism had been popular among Muslim mystics since long: the word Ahmād, after losing its m, becomes Aḥad, 'One'. Its first letter alif, with the numerical value 1, is always considered the symbol of Allah, the one and Absolute, 23 the numerical value of the remaining letter h is 8, that of d is 4, the sum of which, 12, is the number of the twelve imams of the Imamiya Shi‘a, so that the name of the Prophet, Ahmād, contains 1) the alif hinting to God, 2) the m of contingent existence and humanity, and 3) the number of the Shi‘ite imams who distribute the light of Muḥammad on earth.

There are sometimes allusions to painting in his poetry—he could tell his beloved that he had even learnt the art of painting for the sake of finding a way of drawing closer to her or to arouse her attention.

Ghālib has several times compared his poetry to colourful paintings: who does not quote the verse in which he calls his Persian poetry colourful, his Urdu verses colourless? And he elaborates this
idea in the subsequent lines of his poem where he boasts, addressing Bahādūr Shāh Zafar:

Look at my Persian so that you may know that in
the country of imagination
I am Mānt and Arzhang, and this copy is my Artang.

Mānt is regarded by Persian poets as the master-painter—probably owing to the beautifully and lavishly decorated remnants of Manichean manuscripts from East Turkestan or Western China, and Arzang is, in Islamic poetry, the cave in China where Mānt retired and which he decorated with paintings. Of course, if our poet sees his lovely beloved in the embrace of the rival he would rather need a peacock’s foot than Mānt’s brush: the peacock’s foot has always been regarded as the ugliest part of this colourful proud bird.

The picture of his beloved should be the only sign on the paper of his mind:

How ingenious does Ghālib play on the double meaning of pardah as ‘veil’ and ‘canvas for painting’? For him, Majnūn—always represented naked on miniatures—becomes the example for the sad truth that love and longing are never compatible with wealth:

Qais (=Majnūn) has become naked even in the veil (=on the canvas) of the picture . . .

Ghālib was able to express every mood at least once in the symbolism of writing—whether he claims proudly that

the ink in my inkpot is from the blackness of the Night of Mīght (la‘lat al-qadr);

the sky is my page and the stars are dust-sprinkling on my lines:

Surely, he was not such a letter; the hand of the Eternal Calligrapher had drawn him perhaps on a dark paper, that of the darkening age of Muslim India, and of the breakdown of the established order in which his personal life was deeply interwoven—but he was surely one of the most impressive and intriguing letters which the pen of destiny has ever written in the divān of world-poetry.

or whether he complains of his old age:

We have written on the pages of time, and it passed away,
we have become the unique one in the art of the word, and it passed . . .

it is always the true expression of that sensitive, proud poet who knew his own value and who was hopeless and full of hope at the same time.

Every written letter complains in its paper-shirt of the hand of the Great Calligrapher, and still, every letter is unique and cannot be exchanged for another one. The poet who saw everywhere the writing of destiny and saw himself as part of that writing—only he could invent the line in which the complaint of the letters is echoed once more:

O God, why does time obliterate me?
I am not a letter which could be repeated on the
table of the world!

Surely, he was not such a letter; the hand of the Eternal Calligrapher had drawn him perhaps on a dark paper, that of the darkening age of Muslim India, and of the breakdown of the established order in which his personal life was deeply interwoven—but he was surely one of the most impressive and intriguing letters which the pen of destiny has ever written in the divān of world-poetry.
FOOTNOTES


2 Aţār, Labāb al-asrāb, ed. E. G. Browne and M. Qazwini, London 1906, 1903, Vol. II p. 345 (par 1, 2).—A historical instance of the use of a paper shirt is given by Jusnild-i Shârâz, Shâdîl al-šarâz, ed. Muhammad Qazwini and Aţâb u-İbâd, Tehran 1949, where the Qâf lâ Jâmidâdîn ibn Yâsûf al-Mâjîr who had come to Shiraz from Egypt felt disappointed by the treatment he was given put on a paper shirt and went out to complain at the Madrasa of Şâhâb u-İmdâdâdîn, and this is the custom in Egypt that he complained when he deserts of justice, puts on a paper shirt” (p. 356).

3 Aţâr, Divân, ghalzal Nr. 503; Râmî, Divân-i Kâbir Nr. 2134.

4 Khâqânî, Divân, qâbîl p. 197 compares the complaining drum to someone who has put on a paper shirt; twice he compares the paper shirt to the target for the arrow (tarkbân) p. 541, qaftâ p. 258): those who envy him should wear a paper shirt like a target for the arrow.

he also ‘will make a paper shirt because of the cruelty of the friend’ (ghazal p. 557)

and has invented the charming comparison in winter to people in paper shirts, for they so to speak complain of the cruelty of water:

Dâllâ al-tâqîn al-ĝâmil-kam kawâfâ-kawâfâ ar-rusûl-i-mîn dawîn dâshâ

5 Amîr Khusraw, Divân, ghalzal Nr. 1152; cf. Nr. 1712 (again: target for the arrow).

6 Hâfiz, Divân, ed. Abu'l-Qâsim Injâwî, Tehran 1967, p. 122; there the quotation from Aţâbî is given. Cf. also Fighânî, Divân, ghalzal Nr. 310.

7 A fine poetical elaboration of the hadith “The pen has dried up” in Rûmî Mathnawî, V 3132 ff.

8 Amîr Khusraw, too, speaks of the crooked letters, Divân, ghalzal Nr. 1080.

9 Cf. Sp. 111, ghalzal Nr. 11: You know my state, even though the rawâahis is illegible?

10 The book of actions is mentioned in the Qur'an Surah 10/62; 18/47; 34/3; 83/7/12; It is fastened at the neck of everybody, Surah 17/14; f., or given into man's right or left hand, Surah 69/19/25, 38/1/12. — Surah 3/102 speaks of the black and white faces of the pious and the sinners respectively.
Miri Dard has compared the world to a fire-struck paper ('ilmul-kitāb p. 180) and speaks of the 'hundred eyes' of such paper (Divān-Fārāb, Rubā′i 1 p. 118); cf. his Urdu Divān p. 46, 73; Nūrī Muḥammad ʿAndālūsī, Nārī-y ʿAndālūsī 185, II 309, 526.

Bedi speaks of 'binding the letter at the voice's flame' so that it may reach its destination (Divān 99). He also says:

I am the letter of colour that is bound to the wing of the peacock (Divān 167); cf. also id. 219 the combination of the peacock with a chīrīghānī 'firework' and 157 the ghazal with the rhyme kānimūdū 'paper'. Further the verse id. 159:

I did not write a letter in which the heart has not become blood,
Find your news about my letter in the peacock's feathers.

Miri Dard likewise combines the peacock with the scar (Divān-I first rubā′i p. 141), and with eyes and a trap (id. 84); the connection of 'fire-struck paper' and 'snare' is found in a poem of Nūrī ʿAli Shīrīnī (Kashmir II 936). It is but natural to associate the sparkling tail of a peacock with fire, the round designs reminding the poet of scars; cf. the line from The Westminster's Drinker:

I saw a peacock with a fiery tail....
As to the pigeon, it is mostly associated with ashes due to its greyish colour; thus the juxtaposition of the faithful pigeon, the ash-coloured letter-carrier, with the fire-coloured peacock becomes even more impressive.

Jāme, Divān Nr. 357 (p. 309). The elegance of the verse is enhanced by the fact that the poet uses the Persian word chashm for 'eye'—for every reader would expect the Arabic ʿain 'eye' which is also the name of the first letter of the word ʿashār 'lovers'. This combination is found also in a poem of Mīr ʿAll Shīrī Qānī, Maktūmānā, ed. H. Rashidi, Karachi 1956, note 185: 'When the ʿādāt saw the ʿāin of the lover. (alshīrī) ...' and in other verses.


Similar allusions are frequently found in Indo-Persian poetry, cf. Kashmir A 242, 81; Even the Pashto poet Khasbārā Khān Khāntak (d. 1689) says:

Those are real men (of God) who in this world read on the tablet of the forehead the writing of the heart.
(Rubā′is) Nr. 88 in Muntakhab, ed. Anwār ul-Haq, Pashto Academy, Peshawar, s.d.).

Thus Kalīm says:

Beneath the ʿāf of qanāt or (contentment) the ʿāf of haram found place. Our narrow hand was higher than the hand of the wealthy.

Thus the ʿāf of qanāt (contentment) the ʿāf of haram found place. Our narrow hand was higher than the hand of the wealthy.

Khanī, Khasbārā Khān Khāntak, Sur Marāʿī I 1 ff.; cf. also id. 219 the combination of the peacock with a chīrīghānī 'firework' and 157 the ghazal with the rhyme kānimūdū 'paper'.

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Thus Kalīm says:

Beneath the ʿāf of qanāt or (contentment) the ʿāf of haram found place. Our narrow hand was higher than the hand of the wealthy.

The idea that the mystic need not learn any letter besides the ʿāf, is commonplace in the biographies of saints; for the knowledge of Divine Unity as symbolized in the ʿāf renders him independent of this world. These stories recur in Turkey (Yūnus Emre, d. 1321) and in Pakistan (Shāh ʿAbdūl Lāṭif Bīhrī, d. 1752), and the idea of the ʿāf as comprising everything imaginable has often been expressed in high literature and folk literature throughout the Islamic world. Cf. Šarāj, Kībāl al-lumār, p. 89, and a few more examples in Schimmel, Schriftenzyklopädie; further see A. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, Chapel Hill 1974, Appendix I.

Already Manuechehrt expresses the view that Mānī was a skilful painter, see Fouchécour, p. 99; Qāṭān speaks of the 'Chinese painter' (Fouchécour p. 187). Niẓām uses the expression in connection with Fāḥād; Sā′dī and Rūmī are fond of the comparison. The story of the contest of the Greek and Chinese painters as told by both Niẓām and Rūmī—though in differing form—points to the same admiration for Chinese painting (which became, in any case, much better known in the Western Islamic world after the Mongol conquest). That Mānī the Painter was a topaz known to every educated person becomes clear from the fact that it occurs even in Pashto poetry (see Raviart p. 286). About the whole topic cf. J. Rykta, History of Iranian Literature, Dordrecht 1968, p. 61 ff.
In Indo-Persian poetry the image often becomes a symbol of the transitoriness of glory, as Naṣirī says:

Although the country of China was filled with paintings of Māni,
it became waste, neither a picture is there anymore, nor Māni.

(Dīvān, gazāda Nr. 40, p. 509, cf. ghażal Nr. 386).—A particularly charming application of the traditional ‘picture in China’ was invented by Mir Dāād in his Dīvān-i Fārsī, p. 5:

Come, that your picture may take place on the heart’s tablet!
Do not go to China, for there, pictures are (painted) on silk!

An allusion to the painter who draws Maṭrūṭ reduced to skin and bones by Sālik, Kashmir I 307. Cf. Naṣir ‘All, id. II 934:

The disappearing of the painting means the shirt for the naked... i.e. he will no longer be seen as naked, for when the picture disappears he, too, becomes invisible.

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<td>Weimar 8</td>
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<td>Whirling Dervishes vd. Mevlevi</td>
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Zakariya 45
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