

TWO

The Uncreated Garden: Lover's Tears are Treasured Sparks

Ghazal # 68 Nuskkha-e Hamidiyya ed. Hamid Ahmad Khan, Lahore 1969 p. 93

Sher #4; Composed before 1821

گریہ ہائے بے دلاں گنج شرر در آستیں
قہرمان عشق میں حسرت سے لیتے ہیں خراج
lover's tears are treasured sparks of fire
in sleeves;
the terrible rule of love demands offerings
even from those
in love

Vocabulary:

qahrman: rule of grandeur or terror, force, violence also Government, Management of the treasury

be dilan: those without hearts, that is lovers, despondent lovers in this particular she'r

ganj-e sharar: treasure of sparks

hasrat: grief, regret, sorrow, longing, desire, especially one whose fulfilment is unlikely

kharaj: tribute, a tax

Asi: Laments of lovers who have tear-sparks hidden in their sleeves always demand *kharaj* from *hasrat* (desire) as a rule or force of loving (*qahrman-e ishq*). Tears are wiped with sleeves therefore the sleeves are a repertory of a hidden treasure. Demanding *kharaj* from *hasrat* implies taking advantage of *hasrat* because laments of lovers are always related to desires.

Jain: The lover is *hasrat* incarnate; all the lover has are spark tears which he/she hides in the sleeve. According to Sarkhush and Asi, it is the sleeve that asks for *kharaj* and the eye that gives the payment and that is how a treasure is accumulated in the sleeve.

Kantoori: Love's rule is so oppressive that it demands offerings even from the penniless; that is why deprived lovers hide treasure of tears in their sleeves. *Sharar* could be a scribal error; Mirza Ghalib may have written *guhār* (pearls) because it makes sense to have a treasure of pearls, and tears are compared to pearls.

MAF: An interesting but somewhat far-fetched idea. Travelers reportedly hid their money in their sleeves. Lovers wipe their tears with their sleeves, and tears being hot, are sparks flowing like the lava of their emotions. Kantoori doesn't like the she'r because ganj-e sharar is not something one would offer as kharaj! Jain doesn't clarify whether Sarkhush and Asi's reading is acceptable.

My reading of Asi's commentary is that the *nalah* or lament is asking for payment from desire. It is quite an intriguing idea and entirely plausible. The she'r is ambiguous as to who is asking for kharaj but very clear that it is being demanded from hasrat. Notice that Ghalib says "be dilan," that is, those who have given their hearts away have only hot tears as their treasured possession.

The word *qahrman* is problematic. It doesn't mean a state; it doesn't mean a tyrant; it means one who does something, like running a state, guarding something, being the accountant and treasurer-keeper. DehKhoda gives 'hukumat' as the last meaning, among many others, of *qahrman*, but cites no example. Since the poet says *qahrman-e ishq*, no other meaning but the Kingdom of love will fit. I think the main meaning of treasure keeper misled the young poet into using *qahrman-e ishq*.

The she'r is brimming with allusions. There is a contrastive tension between *giryah* and *sharar*, water and fire; treasure of sparks coveted by the Qahrman, has the hint of what will happen if qahr and fire get together. There is congruity between qahr and sharar. Ghalib creates evocative, new vocabulary: ganj-e sharar.