



Historical Context and Thematic Analysis of the Poetry of Amir Khusrau (1253–1325 AD)

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Abstract:

This paper narrows down on the storytelling of history and themes in Poetic Literature contributed by Amir Khusrau and the impact of its contribution on the masses, audience, and listeners in the poetical and musical sessions of medieval periods held by the Sufis belonging to Chishtia Order. In this section of the research, a qualitative analysis approach is adopted to emphasize the importance of contribution by Amir Khusrau through his Poetic Literature, as he contributed immensely to develop and alter the contemporary setting of the Subcontinent through his poetical compositions, which largely influenced the audience mainly consisting of the Hindu and Muslim communities in general, and also led to the development of Persian and native languages in the musical sessions of the Sufi order, thereby leaving a soothing impact on all people through peaceful approaches, thus propagating Islamic thoughts through poetical compositions. Of all the Sufis, Amir Khusrau, the outstanding example of Indian Arts as a poet, musician, and Indian Arts and Music threads transformer, introduced a turning point in poetry and musical sessions in the Subcontinent. The question that is answered through this research paper is that in what way the Poetic Literature contributed by Amir Khusrau was brought among the Chishtia Sufis, their followers, and portrayed the culmination point of poetic accomplishment in the Subcontinent?

Keywords: Amir Khusrau, Chishtia Order, Persian Poetry, Qawwali Mahafils, Sufi Islam, Subcontinent.

Introduction:

Amir Khusrau (1253-1325 AD), the great figure of the Chistia Sufi Order and the ardent follower of Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia (1238-1325), further extended the spiritual as well as cultural influence of the order. Amir Khusrau, in his poetical works, especially in the form of "Qawwali," expressed ideals of divine love, unity, and comprehensiveness, beyond the

limitations of religious affiliations. Contrary to the poetical traditions of many other Sufi orders in his time, the Chistia saints deliberately made use of local languages and symbolic devices in their poetical utterances, thus making their spiritual ideology comprehensible and attractive to the larger crowd. This approach of inclusiveness in literature contributed significantly towards the enshrinement of the spiritual ideology of the Chistia Order in the cultural stream of the subcontinent. Chishtia Sufism is one of the oldest and most significant spiritual movements to originate on the Indian subcontinent, renowned not only as a lineage that contributed to the preservation and nurturing of a mature spiritual thought but also as a source of a rich body of poetry. This poetry was a reflection of Chishtia spiritual philosophy as well as a platform to articulate the spiritual states of the Chishtia saints. This poetry was not only a representation of spiritual philosophy but also contributed immensely to the intellectual development of medieval India and left its mark on the spiritual as well as the intellectual landscape of South Asia. The current research provides a comprehensive assessment of the poetic work of one of the major figures associated with the Chishtia Order. It focuses on the major thematic currents that run through the poetic works of this major figure. It further explores the major impacts that the poetic contributions had in the formation of the major trends in the literary and spiritual traditions. Historically, the Chistia Order's roots lie with Khwaja Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti in the 9th century AD, although it was largely under the religious guidance of Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (1141-1236) that it gained recognition in the Indian subcontinent. The history of the Chisti Order cannot be entirely grasped without understanding it in the larger historical context of the role played by guides, religious preceptors, or successors.

Review of Literature:

Riaz Jafari's "*The Charismatic Khusrau: Life History and Works of Amir Khusrau 'Tooti-e-Hind'*"¹ is a compact yet thoroughly articulated addition to the annals of medieval Indo-Persian civilization. Jafari's biography centers Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), a poet, musician, chronicler, and Sufi disciple of Nizam-ud-din Auliya, within the larger social, political, and intellectual context of the Delhi Sultanate, pinpointing his complex role not only as a poet, composer, historian, and Sufi disciple but also his role in the syncretic process of medieval Indian culture. Jafari's biography is consistently organized in terms of literary-critical study combined with historical context, enabling the reader to reconstruct Khusrau not only as a literary prodigy but also as a thorough agent of the syncretic process of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century. The book presents a critical analysis of the Persian and Hindavi works of Khusro, looking at the innovative aspects he employed in terms of poetic style, metaphorical constructs, and language blending. Jafari reads Khusro's importance within the context of the indigenization of Persian literature and as one who facilitated the transmission of high culture Persian to popular language in the subcontinent. His nickname of "Tooti-e-Hind" receives close attention as a metaphorical construct that represents his preeminence over poetic language. On the methodological level, the study focuses on the close reading of the primary texts in combination with the secondary material, although the study is more interpretive than archival in character. The study still manages to place Khusrau in the context of the intellectual history of South Asia and presents him as the pivotal figure in the creation of the shared culture of the Indian Muslim community. On the whole, Jafari's book is a good secondary source on medieval Indian historiography, Sufi Islam, or the culture of the Indo-Persian literary world but lacks in detailed review on Persian Literature. In his work, *Fawaaidul Fawwaad*, Ameer Hassan Alaa Sijzi has elaborated the malfoozat of his murshid and mentor, Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia, extensively. The work was composed as that of a devoted disciple in the 13th century AD, and this work forms the compilation of sayings related to different facets of the murshid's life. Through the malfoozat of

Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, who was the key to the central administrative mechanism of the Chishtia in Delhi, the overall set of guidelines has been discussed in-depth through which the effective administration of the *dargah* is to be conducted. All that has been presented through the sayings of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia in varying contexts briefly. The work further reveals the poetic genius as that of Ameer Hassan Alaa Sijzi in the mold of Hazrat Amir Khusrav, as the author had a flair in the Persian poetry form and was already well-acclaimed as the murid of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia. The work further portrays the operational guidelines of the Chishtia Order as efficiently run by the murshid. It, however, does not cover or indicate the entire poetic literary norms as elaborated in the sayings by the Chishti Sufis as whole. It fails to present the overall insights through which the developmental stages through this form of art, as implemented through the overall periods by the varying Sufis of the Chishtia Order, could be known in-depth. The work further fails to inform or convey the specifications through which Hazrat Amir Khusrav contributed to the varied facets of the Indo-Persian poetry and music form.²

One of his most renowned works is *Akhbaar Ul Akhiyar*,³ a collection of the sayings, discourses, and narratives of some 300 prominent saints, mystics, and sufi scholars of the Indian subcontinent, compiled by the great Sufi scholar, Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlvi. This massive work is a definitive documentation of the righteous deeds, spiritual pursuits, and exemplary behavior of these illustrious individuals, holding a special significance for all concerned with understanding the righteous ideals promoted through the Chisti, Suhrawardy, Qadiri, and other Sufi orders that flourished in medieval India. Apart from a documentation of history, *Akhbaar Ul Akhiyar* is also a treasure trove of expert knowledge on spirituality, a testimony to the pedagogic, exemplary, and inspirational aspects of Sufi knowledge, all engrossed in its litany of anecdotes, advise, and religious experiences. Though *Akhbaar Ul Akhiyar*, no doubt, has proved to be a valuable addition to the study of Sufi history and Islamic scholarship traditions of the Indian subcontinent, it does tend to show some limitations if judged from the point of view of literary history, especially with respect to poetry. Though this work contains vast narrative details about the moral, ethical, and spiritual teachings that these saints provided, it does not provide any further elucidating details about the poetic literature that developed in medieval times. This work, full of aphoristic wisdom, instruction, and discourses, does not seem to be an exhaustive piece of literature for further study regarding the development of poetry, conventions, and style of Sufi poetry of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Therefore, *Akhbaar Ul Akhiyar*, no doubt, continues to be immensely valuable for preparing any study of Sufi literature and its ethical and spiritual phases, but it does lack some needed requirements for compiling a full-fledged collective poetry work of the medieval Indo-Persian periods of Indo-Pak subcontinent.

The famous writer of *Aab-e-Kausar*,⁴ Sheikh Muhammad Ikram gives a detailed description about the religious, intellectual, and cultural developments in pre-Mughal India with a specific focus on the spiritual and social context of the Delhi Sultanate period. In his work, the author deals with the role of Sufi saints in a very mature and academic way, with a focus on the contribution of the Chishtia Order in determining the spiritual and moral texture of the Indian society in the medieval period. The book is a tribute to the excellent contribution of the Chishtia saints, who played a vital role in the promotion of ethical guidance, spiritual reform, and the transmission of Sufi ideas. After carrying out extensive research, the writer focuses on the historical successes of the Sultans of Sultanate of Dehli along with the biography of the Sufi saints within the larger sociopolitical milieu of the Indian subcontinent. However, although *Aab-e-Kausar* itself is such an important piece of history and scholarly literature, it does not contain

an in-depth analysis of the art of poetic expression by Chishti Sufis. Although *Aab-e-Kausar* contains discussions about the religious and moral teachings of these saints themselves, it does not contain any analysis of what these saints have contributed to the development of poetic literature. As such, although *Aab-e-Kausar* can certainly be considered an important resource text on the subject of the Delhi Sultanate and the life of the Sufi saints, it would not be considered an in-depth resource text on Chishti poetic expression. Rasheed Malik, in his book *Amir Khusrau ka Ilm-e-Moseeki*,⁵ remarks that history, as far as poetry and music are concerned, has been obscured in South Asia since centuries. According to him, most of what is known today is based on anecdotal accounts and mythological narratives associated with gods and goddesses. Sometimes, the names of certain Sanskrit texts appear in historical accounts; however, it is almost impossible to determine the era when these books were written, and scarce to nil hard evidence is available about who the authors were. In addition, the language of these Granths remains so complex and difficult to understand that even the Sanskrit scholars of today can hardly fathom their meaning. Rasheed Malik asserts that, as far as the common people and the literary fraternity are concerned-whether they practice poetry and music or not-one fact is universally accepted: poetic genius and the tradition of Qawwali belong to Hazrat Amir Khusrau. Poets often claim themselves to be special followers of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, while writers maintain that the concept and form of Qawwali, as known today, originated from him. The author deals in great detail with Amir Khusrau's deep knowledge of music and his contributions to music theory and practice. However, the book does not delve deeply into the poetic literature of the Chishtia Sufis or even the narrative traditions of the Sufis on poetry itself. This lapse points to the need for a far more coherent and comprehensive study centered on the poetic utterances and literary works of Sufi saints during the era of the Delhi Sultanate, more specifically within the Chishtia Order, to properly conceptualize their intervention within South Asian literary and spiritual culture.

Research Methodology:

An analytical research approach has been employed to evaluate the historical context and thematic dimensions of the literary output of Amir Khusrau. His writings significantly contributed to projecting a peaceful and inclusive image of Sufi Islam in the medieval period and facilitated the dissemination of the spiritual teachings and ethical message of the Chishti Sufi Order beyond regional boundaries, thereby fostering a universal discourse of harmony and coexistence. This literary tradition found prominent expression in the musical domain, particularly in Qawwali, where it attained its highest refinement due to widespread acceptance across the Indian subcontinent. Chishti Sufi literary production gained considerable popularity, attracted broad segments of Indian society, and played a transformative role in shaping religious sensibilities. The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources, systematically gathered from interviews, libraries and published texts. The principal strength of this research lies in its critical interpretation and thematic examination of Amir Khusrau's original compositions as a Chishti Sufi, especially his masnavis and poetic compilations. Secondary literature has also been extensively consulted and has proven essential in corroborating arguments, contextualizing interpretations, and supporting the historical analysis presented in this study.

Thematic Impact of Khusrau's Poetry:

The effect of Amir Khusrau's Sufi poetry on the human body and soul cannot be underestimated. It is clear that the assorted themes and profound meanings associated with the couplets of Khusraus's Sufi poetry, especially, influenced the hearts and minds of sensitive souls as well as

common people. The effect of rhythm and beat of music is an undeniable fact that influences human disposition. Poetry with music is the reflection of the true nature of human beings. This fact has been proved by the creation of poetic literature, the proliferation of religion, and the spreading of the message of Faqar. This happened within the Indian subcontinent that the Sufi and saints like Khusrau infused warmth and intensity into the hearts of devoted and pure-minded people of the Indian community through the sublime amalgamation of Sufi vocabulary and music. As such, the amalgamation of poetry and music brought changes to public thinking. According to emotionally enticing couplets and poetry, which were later rendered in Qawwali and native music, Sufi poetry brought forth a sublime and permanent impact on Indian hearts. The complexity and richness of themes associated with Persian ghazals and poetry of Khusrau represented the global, sublime, and heart-moving effect of music, divine, and true love, which manifested itself, not only through and around the human body, but also through and around the inner being of people. This also happened through the poetry of Amir Khusrau, that he through poetic prowess, relieved suffering souls of among the community. This brought people closer to the fire of spirit through poetry. Owing to his poetic depth, people were able to attain greater spiritual heights. This is the reason that the Khusrau is considered the pinnacle of creative human powers of the era Muslim rule during the Sultanate period. This was also happened through the poetry and its exemplary impact that the Sufis not only strive for territorial acquisitions, but they conquered hearts, minds, and souls also.⁶

The Amir Khusrau had even taken up the task of promoting Islam and spreading the religion through poetry in form of ghazals, songs and music, which is a heartwarming example in the entire history of Sufi Islam of subcontinent. *Amir Khusrau* gained such control over poetry and the music composed in the genes of the Hindus that even today Muslims enjoy the position in the field of music as teachers and others communities consider themselves as students to the extent of the Indian subcontinent. The Sufis took up the task of turning hearts of the native Hindus away from the worldly desires with the help of poetic excellence and composing the various form of music including Dadra, Tarana,⁷ Khyal, Qual-qalbana, Dhurpad, Thumari and *Qawwali*, which was indeed an evolution in the field of arts in Indian Subcontinent. Amir Khusrau carried out the work of spreading Islam in the Indian subcontinent through poetry and music. The nature and quality of his work was very beautiful.⁸ In sub-continent, the preaching of real message of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to convert the hearts with soft spoken words and gentle acts was channelized by the strong enthusiasm of this *Sufi* poet of *Chishtia* order. His outlook, grace and persuasive voice brought about the Islamic revolution in the minds and souls of Indians. The credit for making Muslim poetic literature and music as an innovation, in the Indian sub-continent undoubtedly goes to *Hazrat Amir Khusrau*. The present form of *Qawwali* is also form of his continuous efforts being the fore-father of this genre of music in Subcontinent.

Poetic Works and Thematic Analysis:

Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (1253-1325 AD) is one of the few literary and intellectual figures in history, who was an all-round personality. He was one of the first poets who, along with being a representative of the classical Persian narrative, absorbed elements of Indian culture and linguistic status in his poetry. His original name was Abul Hasan Yamin al-Din Khusrau. Amir Khusrau was born in Patiali in 1253 AD. He was a Turkish descent from an Indian mother, because of which he inherited two different cultural traditions, which later appeared in the form of a poet in a harmonious culture. During his education in Delhi, he acquired exceptional skills in Persian, Arabic, history and poetry. However, his poetic consciousness got real shape in the

company of Hazrat Khawaja Nizamuddin Auliya's spiritual friendship, which transferred the poetry of virtual love to the direction of Divine love.⁹

Five Anthologies of Poetry by Amir Khusrau:

Amir Khusrau divided his poetic life into four periods, which are represented by four famous Persian divans. These divans are considered as a fundamental source for understanding his intellectual and poetic development.

1. Tohfah al-Saghr (تحفة الصغر)¹⁰

This divan is representative of Amir Khusrau's early period of poetry, in which his young age and poetic ability, strong language and dependence on classical Persian narration are prominent. This Divan contained the different forms of poetry including *Ghazal*, *Qaseedah* and *Rubai*. In addition, youth, virtual love and courtly praise are dominant in the themes, however, in some poems, the Sufism of the early days is also visible.

2. The middle of al-Hayat (وسط الحياة)¹¹

This divan depicts the stages of Amir Khusrau's intellectual maturity. In this virtual love along with real love and moral consciousness becomes prominent. The seriousness in the language, depth in the style, and breadth of thought in the content makes him distinguished from his first collection. This is the stage and time when Khusrau's Sufi consciousness takes a clear form.

3. Ghurrat al-Kamal (غرة الكمال)¹²

This Diwan of Amir Khusrau is considered as the point of the peak of poetry, where he reaches intellectual maturity, technical perfection, and mystic mysticism of the highest level. Divine love, unity of existence, philanthropy and moral purification are the central themes of this Diwan. The Persian language reaches its extreme of tenderness and metaphorical beauty here.

4. Nihayat-al-Kamaal (نهاية الكمال)¹³

Amir Khosrow authored this diwan after the death of Sultan Ghais al-Din Tugluq and Sultan Mohammad Tughluq's accession to the throne, i.e. sometime before his own death. Along with the divan, there is also a very brief preface. This preface follows the Hamd, Nat, and Manqbat in praise of Nizam al-Din Auliya. This diwan is very rare. There are very few versions of it available and 22 Qasidas and poems in the British Museum in the present version.

5. Baqia-e- Naqia (بقيه نقیہ)¹⁴

This is Amir Khusrau's final divan, in which the themes of life's experiences, the instability and transition of time and search for internal and spiritual solace are dominant. In this divan, the Sufi thought is very serious and profound, which is a sign of spiritual maturity.

Masnavis of Khusrau:

Amir Khusrau's Masnavis, *Khumsatul Khusrau* is an important addition to the Persian traditional literature which is inspired by the Nizami Ghanjavi's Masnavi *Khumsa* but the individuality of Khusrau's style is prominent.

- **Qir'an-al-Saadain (قرآن السعدین)**: This masnavi is written in an historical and courtly background in which the political stability and royal harmony are the subject.
- **Neh Sephar (نه سپهر)**: This masnavi of Indian society, civilization, seasons, customs, and geography is a poetic document, which makes it an important source of cultural history.

- **Miftah-al-Futooh** (مفتاح الفتوح)¹⁶: This masnavi was written by Khusrau during the reign of Jalal al-Din Firouz Khilji. It is based on mention of the conquests of the king. Compared to the history of the masnavis, this masnavi is very brief, and that is why Khosrow included it with Diwan Ghurrat al-Kamal.
- **Tughlaq Nama** (تغلق نامہ)¹⁷: This is masnavi of history in which the political situations of the Tughlaq dynasty are elaborated.

Thematic Analysis of Poetry of Amir Khusrau:

Poetic expression rooted in Indian vernaculars, embedded within a distinctly Hindu cultural milieu and literary sensibility, is frequently evident in the poetic corpus of Amir Khusrau. Simultaneously, Khusrau occupies a pivotal position in shaping the formative features of the Urdu language.¹⁸ For this reason, his popular verse functioned as an effective medium for communicating Sufi ideals to the masses. Abul Hasan Yaminuddin, later renowned as Hazrat Khawaja Amir Khusrau Nizami¹⁹ and widely remembered as Hazrat Amir Khusrau, attained unparalleled and universal renown. Today, his reputation extends across India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkestan. His legacy remains enduring within the poetic and musical historiography of the subcontinent. It is traditionally reported that his spiritual guide, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, held a particular fondness for Purbi poetry in the context of Qawwali. The performance of Qawwali in the Purbi idiom often evoked a deep emotional response in him. Consequently, Hazrat Amir Khusrau composed numerous ragas in the Purbi language primarily to fulfill his mentor's aesthetic preference. It appears that the inclination of his spiritual master played a decisive role, resulting in the presentation of a significant number of musical compositions and Qawwalis in the Purbi language before him.²⁰ On one occasion, Amir Khusrau presented himself in the spiritual presence of his mentor, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, and humbly requested him to supplicate that his poetry be endowed with an unmatched sweetness. The Murshid, acknowledging the plea of his devoted disciple, replied that sugar was placed beneath the bed and instructed him to retrieve it, consume a portion himself, and distribute the rest among those present. Amir Khusrau complied with the instruction, and thereafter his speech acquired a distinctive sweetness which, even after the lapse of more than seven centuries, has remained undiminished. Owing to his extraordinary poetic excellence, Khusrau was conferred the honorific title of *Malik al-Shu'ara'* (King of the Poets) by one of the contemporary sultans.²¹ Among his celebrated poetic compositions, a particular couplet is frequently cited and continues to be rendered by Qawwals of successive generations as a testimony to his remarkable eloquence, literary mastery, and elevated poetic stature.²²

Persian Verse:

نمی دام چه منزل بود شب جانے که من بودم
بہر سو رقص بسمل بود شب جانے که من بودم²³

Urdu Translation:

مجھے معلوم نہیں کہ رات کے وقت کون سا مقام تھا جب میں موجود تھا۔
بہر طرف خون آلود رقص تھا، رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا۔²⁴

Translation:

"I do not know what place it was at night when I was there; everywhere there was a blood-covered dance, at night when I was there."

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

1. مجهے معلوم نہیں / I do not know / نمی دانم
2. کون سا مقام تھا / what place or destination it was / چہ منزل بود
3. رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا / at night when I was there / شب جائے کہ من بودم

Literal meaning of first line:

"I do not know what place it was, at night when I was there."

Second Line:

1. بہر سو / everywhere / بہر سو
2. رقص / dance / رقص
3. خون آلود / blood-covered / بسمل

Literally means *having the head wrapped in blood* or *covered with blood*; metaphorically indicates suffering, martyrdom, or violent ecstasy.

4. رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا / it was, at night, when I was there / شب جائے کہ من بودم

Literal meaning of second line:

"Everywhere there was a blood-covered dance, at night when I was there."

Thematic Analysis (Conceptual):

1. نمی دانم چہ منزل بود (I do not know what place it was)

Indicates mystical bewilderment or loss of ordinary perception. The poet is in a state of spiritual ecstasy or disorientation, where normal spatial and temporal awareness is suspended.

2. شب جائے کہ من بودم (at night when I was there)

Night often symbolizes mystical darkness, inner journey, or the hidden world of spiritual experience. The poet situates his experience in a liminal and transformative time.

3. بہر سو رقص (everywhere dance)

Represents ecstatic movement, surrender, and mystical joy. The repetition of dance imagery, common in Amir Khusrau's and Sufi poetry, links physical expression to inner spiritual states.

4. بسمل (blood-covered / bloodied)

Introduces suffering, sacrifice, or intensity of devotion. The bloodied dance suggests that spiritual ecstasy often involves suffering or martyrdom, blending joy and pain.²⁵

5. بود شب جائے کہ من بودم (it was, at night, when I was there)

Repetition of the temporal setting emphasizes personal immersion in the experience. The poet is fully present in the mystical state, participating in the ecstatic, even violent, manifestation of divine or emotional intensity.

Thematic Analysis:

This verse illustrates a profound mystical and existential state where the poet is immersed in ecstasy, disorientation, and intense spiritual experience. The speaker does not comprehend the exact nature of the place he inhabits, reflecting a Sufi motif of ineffable experience beyond ordinary perception. The imagery of blood-covered dance suggests that spiritual ecstasy is not merely joyous but also involves suffering, sacrifice, and intensity of devotion. Nighttime symbolizes inner darkness and the hidden realm of the spirit, where ordinary laws of space, time, and decorum do not apply. The verse emphasizes that true mystical experience is simultaneously ecstatic and perilous: the self is lost, perception is suspended, joy and suffering merge, and the poet participates fully in the transformative, even violent, dynamics of divine love or mystical

presence. In essence, Amir Khusrau presents spiritual ecstasy as both transcendent and corporeal, where dance, suffering, and mystical disorientation converge to create an aesthetic, devotional, and existential experience.

Persian Verse:

پری پیکر نگاری ، سرو قد ، لالہ رخساری
سراپا آفت دل بود شب جائے کہ من بودم²⁶

Urdu Translation:

پروانہ جسم و صورت والا ، سرو قد ، لالہ مانند رخسار والا ، صورت والا ، سرو قد ، لالہ مانند رخسار والا ، سرو قد ، لالہ مانند رخسار والا ، سرو قد ، لالہ مانند رخسار کی آفت تھا ، رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا۔

Literal Translation:

"She had a fairy-like, beautifully formed body, tall as a cypress, with tulip-like cheeks; she was entirely a source of my heart's torment at night when I was there."

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

پروانہ جسم و صورت والا / پری پیکر نگاری 1. *having a body like a beautiful painting*
 پیکر نگاری / *beauty of form / artistic figure*
 ○ پری / *fairy-like / ethereal / delicate*
 2. سرو قد / *tall as a cypress*
 سرو قد / *tall as a cypress*
 3. لالہ مانند رخساری / *tulip-like cheeks / لالہ رخساری*

Literal meaning of first line:

"Having a fairy-like, beautifully formed body, tall as a cypress, with tulip-like cheeks..."

Second Line:

سراپا دل کی آفت تھی / سراپا آفت دل بود 1. *entirely a source of heart's torment*
 سراپا / *entire / from head to toe*
 ○ آفت دل / *disaster, torment, or source of emotional turmoil*
 2. رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا / شب جائے کہ من بودم 2. *at night when I was there / شب جائے کہ من بودم*

Literal meaning of second line:

"She was entirely a source of my heart's torment, at night when I was there."

Thematic Analysis (Conceptual):

1. پری پیکر نگاری (Fairy-like, beautifully formed body)
 ○ Emphasizes ethereal beauty and aesthetic admiration. The beloved's appearance is otherworldly, almost divine in perfection.

2. سرو قد (Tall as a cypress)
 ○ Cypress imagery is common in Persian poetry, symbolizing elegance, grace, and uprightness.

3. لالہ رخساری (Tulip-like cheeks)
 ○ Cheeks compared to tulips signify youth, vitality, and beauty, evoking both visual and emotional impact.

4. سراپا آفت دل بود (Entirely a source of heart's torment)²⁷
 ○ Despite physical beauty, the beloved causes emotional turmoil, representing the intense power of love and attraction. The torment is both pleasurable and painful, typical of classical Persian romantic-mystical poetry.

5. شب جائے کے من بودم (At night when I was there)

- Night often symbolizes intimacy, secrecy, and mystical or emotional intensity. The setting enhances romantic or spiritual experience, creating a liminal space for intense emotion.

Thematic Analysis:

This verse explores the intense emotional and aesthetic impact of the beloved on the poet. The beloved's beauty is depicted as ethereal and overwhelming, with features like cypress-like stature and tulip-like cheeks evoking both physical admiration and spiritual fascination. Yet, this beauty is not merely visual—it is emotionally powerful, described as a source of heart's torment. The poet experiences both pleasure and anguish, a duality common in classical Persian love poetry, where intense attraction is intertwined with emotional suffering. The setting “at night when I was there” adds a layer of intimacy and mystical intensity, as darkness often signifies both secrecy and spiritual depth. The verse therefore combines sensory aesthetic admiration with emotional intensity, portraying love as an overwhelming, transformative experience. It reflects Amir Khusrau's skill in blending romantic, mystical, and emotional dimensions, showing that true encounter with beauty can both delight and overwhelm the heart.

Persian Verse:

رقیب گوش بر آواز، او در ناز و من ترسان
سُخن گفتن چه مشکل بود، شب جای که من بودم²⁸

Urdu Translation:

رقبہ کان لگائے ہوئے تھا، وہ ناز میں تھا اور میں ڈرا بوا تھا،
بات کرنا کتنا مشکل تھا، رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا۔

Translation:

"The rival was listening attentively, he was in coyness, and I was fearful; how difficult it was to speak, at night when I was there."

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

- رقبہ / رقبیان - the rival / opponent in love
- کان لگائے ہوئے تھا / گوش بر آواز - listening attentively
- وہ ناز میں تھی / او در ناز - she was in coyness or playful grace
- اور میں ڈرا بوا تھا / و من ترسان - and I was fearful

Literal meaning of first line:

"The rival was listening attentively, she was in playful grace, and I was fearful."

Second Line:

- بات کرنا کتنا مشکل تھا / سُخن گفتن چہ مشکل بود - how difficult it was to speak
- رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا / شب جای کے من بودم - at night when I was there

Literal meaning of second line:

"How difficult it was to speak, at night when I was there."

Thematic Analysis (Conceptual):

1. (Rival listening attentively)
 - Introduces tension and social constraint in the context of romantic or courtly love. Presence of a rival heightens emotional intensity.
2. او در ناز (She was in coyness / playful grace)
 - The beloved's coyness creates a delicate emotional interplay, evoking longing, hesitation, and emotional refinement typical of classical Persian romance.
3. و من ترسان (I was fearful)
 - Poet experiences emotional vulnerability and hesitation, reflecting both fear of the rival and the intensity of his love.
4. سخن گفتن چه مشکل بود (How difficult it was to speak)
 - Expresses the challenge of communication under social or emotional constraints, highlighting courtly and mystical love motifs, where speech is laden with fear and reverence.²⁹
5. شب جای که من بودم (At night when I was there)
 - Night evokes intimacy, secrecy, and heightened emotion, situating the poet in a liminal, intense emotional state.

Thematic Analysis:

This verse illustrates the tension and emotional delicacy of love within the classical Persian context. The presence of a rival, the beloved's coyness, and the poet's fear create a charged emotional environment where speaking becomes a difficult, almost impossible act. The night setting intensifies the intimacy and psychological complexity of the encounter. Thematically, the verse reflects Amir Khusrau's mastery in blending emotional subtlety with situational drama: love is not only ecstatic or aesthetic but also an interplay of fear, social constraints, and emotional intensity. The poet captures the psychological and relational dimensions of love, showing that the presence of the beloved, societal pressures, and rivals shape the lover's experience of desire, hesitation, and expression.

Persian Verse:

خدا خود میر مجلس بود اندر لامکان خسرو
محمد شمع محفل بود شب جائے که من بودم³⁰

Translation:

"God Himself was the master of the gathering within Khusrau's hall, and Muhammad (PBUH) was the illuminating lamp of the assembly, at night when I was there."

Urdu Translation:

خدا خود مجلس کا سردار تھا، خسرو (شاعری اور ادب کا بادشاہ) کے اندر،
اور محمد صلی اللہ علیہ وآلہ وسلم محفل کی شمع تھے، رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا۔

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

1. خدا خود / God Himself
2. مجلس کا سردار تھا / chief of the gathering
3. خسرو کے اندر / within the palace or abode of Khusrau
 - لامکان – place, palace, or hall
 - خسرو – Khusrau, referring to Amir Khusrau, the poet and musician

Literal meaning of first line:

"O Khusrau! God Himself was the master of the ceremony within unbounded state."³¹

Second Line:

محفل کی شمع تھے / Muhammad (PBUH) was the lamp of the assembly /
1. محمد شمع محفل بود / light or illuminating presence of the gathering

○ رات کے وقت جب میں موجود تھا / at night when I was there / شب جائے کہ من بودم 2.

Literal meaning of second line:

"Muhammad (PBUH) was the illuminating lamp of the assembly at night when I was there."

Thematic Analysis (Conceptual):

1. خدا خود میر مجلس بود (God Himself was the master of the gathering)
 - Emphasizes divine presence as central to art, music, and assembly. Khusrau's gatherings are spiritually charged, where art and devotion coexist.
2. (within unbounded state O Khusrau)³²
 - Highlights the intimate and sacred space of poetic, musical, and spiritual performance. Khusrau's gatherings are both artistic and mystical arenas.
3. (Muhammad PBUH was the lamp of the assembly)
 - Metaphorically positions the Prophet as the source of spiritual illumination, suggesting that all beauty and art ultimately reflect divine light.
4. (شب جائے کہ من بودم) (at night when I was there)
 - The night setting conveys intimacy, contemplative depth, and mystical ambiance, situating the poet as a witness to the divine and prophetic presence.

Thematic Analysis:

This verse portrays Amir Khusrau's gatherings as sacred spaces where art, devotion, and divine presence converge. God is the master of the assembly, underscoring that all aesthetic and spiritual excellence emanates from the divine. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is metaphorically the lamp illuminating the gathering, signifying that guidance, light, and inspiration are central to both art and spirituality. The verse emphasizes the fusion of mystical reverence with poetic and musical celebration, a hallmark of Khusrau's ethos. The poet situates himself as a witness to this divine-aesthetic reality, highlighting the spiritual significance of night gatherings. It reflects a broader Sufi theme: true art and ecstasy are inseparable from divine presence and prophetic illumination, where the assembly becomes both a space of aesthetic pleasure and spiritual insight.

Implied Analysis:

Amir Khusrau's Persian poetry masterfully weaves romantic, mystical, aesthetic, and spiritual themes. Across the selected verses, recurring motifs emerge: night, dance, beauty, ecstatic surrender, emotional tension, divine presence, and martyrdom. This ghazal depicts both human love and spiritual devotion, showing Khusrau's skill in blending sensory, emotional, and mystical experiences into an integrated literary and spiritual vision.³³

1. Night as Liminal and Mystical Space:

شب جائے کہ من بودم (at night when I was there)

- In "I do not know what place it was at night when I was there; everywhere there was a blood-covered dance", night represents mystical disorientation, ecstasy, and existential intensity.

- In the verses describing beauty (خدا خود میر مجلس ...پری پیکر نگاری) and divine assembly (بیان از جمیع انسانیت ...یاری)، night heightens intimacy, emotional intensity, and spiritual receptivity.³⁴

Interpretation: Night serves as a liminal space, allowing the poet to experience both love and divine presence beyond ordinary constraints of time, fear, or social norms.³⁵

2. Dance and Ecstasy:

- Verses like “*everywhere there was blood-covered dance*” and Khusrav’s other romantic and mystical imagery show movement as a metaphor for ecstatic experience.
- Dance appears both physical and symbolic, representing:
 - Spiritual surrender (Sufi *samā’*)
 - Emotional intensity in romantic love
 - Courage in the face of societal or existential threat

Insight: Ecstatic dance embodies the union of body, emotion, and mystical consciousness, illustrating how love divine or human manifests in embodied expression.

3. Beauty and Emotional Impact:

Verses describing the beloved (پری پیکر نگاری، سرو قد، لاله رخساری) emphasize ethereal

physical beauty:

- Cypress-like stature and tulip-like cheeks evoke grace, vitality, and aesthetic delight.
- The beloved is also “a source of heart’s torment”, showing that beauty is simultaneously pleasurable and painful, reflecting classical Persian poetic duality.

Interpretation: Beauty functions as a catalyst for emotional and spiritual intensity, intertwining desire, admiration, and suffering—a common motif in Khusrau's romantic and mystical poetry.

4. Divine Presence and Spiritual Illumination

In the verse “*God Himself was the master of the gathering within Khusrav’s hall; Muhammad (PBUH) was the lamp of the assembly*”:

- Divine and prophetic presence frames aesthetic and poetic experience, transforming gatherings into spiritually charged spaces.
- The poet positions himself as a witness to this sacred illumination, where art, devotion, and mystical insight converge.

Insight: Khusrav blends aesthetic enjoyment with spiritual reverence, suggesting that true beauty and ecstasy are inseparable from divine and prophetic light.

5. Fear, Rivalry, and Emotional Tension

In the verse “*The rival was listening attentively, she was in playful grace, and I was fearful*”:

- Social and emotional constraints introduce psychological complexity.
- Fear and hesitation intensify the lover's emotional vulnerability, highlighting the delicate interplay of attraction, rivalry, and intimacy.

Interpretation: Human emotion, societal pressures, and relational dynamics enrich the poetry, showing Khusrau's ability to capture subtlety of love and psychological tension alongside mystical ecstasy.

Thematic Analysis:

Across these verses, Khusrau demonstrates a continuum of experience from aesthetic admiration to spiritual ecstasy:

1. Personal Ecstasy: Immediate responses to beauty or love, often expressed through dance, fear, or emotional turmoil.
2. Social and Emotional Constraints: Presence of rivals, coyness, and societal norms heighten psychological and relational tension.
3. Mystical Experience: Night, divine presence, and prophetic illumination transform human and aesthetic experience into spiritual insight and ecstasy.
4. Union of Pleasure and Pain: Beauty, love, and ecstasy are simultaneously delightful and tormenting, reflecting a dual nature central to classical Persian and Sufi poetry.

Khusrau's poetry thus embodies integration of the human, aesthetic, and divine, showing that true love romantic or mystical—demands vulnerability, courage, and total surrender. Whether through dance on metaphorical thorns, observing divine gatherings, or experiencing bloodied ecstatic states, the poet reveals a complex interplay of sensory, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, making his work rich, layered, and profoundly philosophical.

“God himself was the master of ceremony in that heavenly court
O Khusrau, where the face of the Prophet (SAW) too was shedding light like a candle”³⁷.

In this verse, Amir Khusrau beautifully conveys the profound relationship between the divine, the Prophet Muhammad, and the spiritual seeker. The line "خدا خود میر مجلس بود اندر لامکان خسرو" (God Himself was the master of the gathering in the realm of the unseen) highlights the presence of the divine as the ultimate guide and source of wisdom in the spiritual assembly. Here, "لامکان" (the realm of the unseen) signifies the spiritual dimension beyond ordinary perception. The second line, "محمد شمع مهفل بود شب جانے کے من بودم" ³⁸ (Muhammad was the candle of the gathering, the night where I was present), uses the metaphor of the Prophet Muhammad as a candle illuminating the darkness of ignorance and guiding seekers towards truth and enlightenment. The imagery of light emphasizes the Prophet's role in dispelling spiritual darkness and providing warmth and guidance to those on the path. The overall message of the verse reflects the essence of Sufism and the recognition of God as the ultimate presence and the Prophet Muhammad as a central figure in guiding seekers toward spiritual enlightenment. It conveys the idea that in the divine assembly, the seeker finds illumination and understanding through the light of the Prophet's teachings. Amir Khusrau highlights the importance of divine presence and prophetic guidance in the spiritual journey, encouraging individuals to seek the light that leads to deeper knowledge and connection with the divine. *Amir* was his hereditary title. He adopted a pure Indian style in his poetry and music. That was the reason, he became very popular. In his art, the countrymen felt the scent of their soil. However, time and circumstances affected it and many changes continued to take place in it. Initially, its language was Persian. Gradually, he wrote poems in other regional languages took place in poetry and *Qawwali* and became the leading poets the age.³⁹ However, the word *Qawwali* came to be used as the name of a particular genre of music in India music of which the whole credit goes to *Hazrat Amir Khusrau* across the subcontinent.⁴⁰

Interestingly he used poetry as a strategy for his internal solace and the propagation of Islam respectively, because the Indian people were fond of the fascination created by the music on their minds since ancient times.⁴¹ Among the teachings of *Chishtia Sufis*, *Qawwali* is placed at the

central point to get closer to *Sheikh* (spiritual guide), the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and God respectively. The central idea which leads a disciple to the ultimate journey to reach God via Prophet, is *Sheikh* (spiritual guide). This is why it causes mortality for the listeners and finally results in the union (a state of *halool*) with the ultimate truth. However, there is a beautiful and up-to-date explanation on the permissibility of *Qawwali* by the famous *Chishtia* saint and a poet of *Saraiki* dialect *Hazrat Khawaja Ghulam Fareed*, who said that listening to poetry and *Qawwali* was not forbidden in any respect.⁴²

Conclusion:

The poetic literature produced by the *Chishti Sufis* represents a profound synthesis of spiritual devotion and artistic expression. By weaving together themes of divine love, self-annihilation, and service to humanity, these poets created a lasting legacy that continues to inspire devotees and lovers of literature. Their emphasis on inclusivity, vernacular expression, and music ensured that their teachings resonated far beyond the confines of the Sufi order, contributing to the rich cultural and spiritual tapestry of South Asia. The poetry of *Chishti Sufis* remains a vital source for those seeking spiritual wisdom and artistic beauty, standing as a testament to the enduring power of mystical expression. Furthermore, these *Sufis* attracted the Indian public towards fundamental teachings of Islam through their poetic and prose writings in a meaningful and innovative style, which were sung during the *Qawwali* gatherings. It was personal conduct and teachings of the *Sufis*, that tensions of the routine life among peoples, mended their ways to attend the *Qawwali* gatherings and caused a revolution in the mind and the then existing musical art of subcontinent. *Khawaja Moeenuddin Chishti Ajmeri*, a leading light of the *chishtia* order and beloved disciple of the *Khawaja Usman al-harwani*, became a principal source of preaching of Islam through the medium of *Qawwali* and poetry.

He was followed by his disciple *Khawaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki*, a second well-known *sufi* of the *chishtia*, who earned the disciple like, *Baba Fariduddin Ganjshakar*. *Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia* as disciple of *Baba Farid* led the order in a splendid way and earned magnificent and prolific disciple known as *Hazrat Amir Khusrau*, who served the literature and art of subcontinent whole-heartedly. It is proven that *Khusrau* as poet and artist reached at the peak of artistry not only in the field of poetry but *Qawwali* and music also. *Khusrau* was the author of innumerable verses, *diwans* and books of prose. As *masnvi* writer, he rose to such a level that his *masnvis* got transcribed by the esteemed *ghazal*-writer of Persian, *al-Hafiz*. In the art of *Qawwali* he reached at the zenith. *Khusrau* proved himself to be the emperor of the art of poetry and *Qawwali*. As an artist of his age, his empire of artistry has not been challenged by anyone till date. Probably it was the blessing of the same gratitude which was given to *Khusrau* by his *murshid*, *Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia* that he invented and improvised many *ragas*. He was undoubtedly a great poet of almost all times in sub-continent. The country had not produced any poet equal to him. His greatness was recognized by the world. He was unique in this genre of art. Some new inventions and innovations also in form of musical instruments, went to his credit. *Khusrau* gave a pure Indian touch to his poetis literature which could be called an example of unity in plurality and imitated by countless successive poets and artists. In nutshell, it can be asserted that the contribution of *Amir Khusrau* as a *chishti Sufi* and disciple in the field of poetry especially through the conduction of his personal gatherings in the lands of subcontinent is highly commendable. In his narration about poetry, he practically became the icons of the delivery of the message of love, peace and harmony in the Indian society. The propagation of Islam through the polite message in form of genre of poetry and *Qawwali* music, is a landmark achievement by the him in the history of *Sufi Islam* of subcontinent. *Qawwali mahafil* are

discussed especially in the *malfoozat-e-Mashaikh-e-Chishtia* of *Chishtia* order of subcontinent. most of the Chishti Sufis were poets, there was a specific schedule for the conduct of poetic and *Qawwali mahafil* in the Chishti Sufi *dargah* rituals.

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