

Historical and Thematic Appraisal of Persian Poetic Literature Produced by Syed Usman Harwani (1129-1220)

Muhammad Hassan¹, Asif Naveed², Anam Aziz³, Rizwan Ullah Kokab⁴

¹ Lecturer Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. Email: hassansanwal@hotmail.com

² PhD Scholar, Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. Email: Asifnaveed901@hotmail.com

³ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. Email: anamaziz644@gmail.com

⁴ Professor, Department of History, Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. Email: rizwankokab@hotmail.com (Corresponding Author)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i1.1406>

Abstract

This paper assesses the historical and thematic appraisal of Poetic Literature produced by an early *Chishti Sufi* Syed Usman Harwani and its impact on the audience during the poetic and Qawwali Mahafils of the Chishti Sufis. In this piece of research a qualitative analytical method is applied to highlight the contribution of the *Sufi* in form of his poetic Literature, as he contributed a lot to advance and reshape the contemporary environment through poetry which greatly influenced the audiences and left a deep impact on and gradual development of Persian and other native languages in the Sufi musical gatherings and Qawwali at the same time and touched the hearts of public in a peaceful manner and preached Islamic thoughts through lyrics. Among all *Sufis* of Indian Subcontinent, Syed Usman Harwani was the paragon of virtues and a leading Sufi in Indian context who guided spiritually the notable and men of letters. Especially Khawja Moeenuddin Chishti Ajmairi was among his disciples, who pioneered and advanced artistic threads in the field of poetry and music in subcontinent. The question that has been dealt in this research paper is that how the poetic literature of *Chishti Sufis* evolved among *Chishti Sufis* and their disciples, and signified and initiated the pinnacle time of the poetic excellence in subcontinent?

Key Words: Historical Appraisal, Harwani, Chishti, Persian poetry, Ajmairi, Islam, Subcontinent.

Introduction

The Chishti Sufi order is considered the pioneer and custodian of one of the most prominent and influential Sufi traditions in the Indian subcontinent and produced a significant body of poetic literature. This poetry not only reflects the spiritual doctrines of the Chishti Order but also serves as a vehicle for expressing the mystical experiences and teachings of its saints. The Chishti Sufis, through their poetic works, played an essential role in shaping the literary and cultural landscape of medieval and early modern India, leaving an enduring legacy of spiritual and poetic thought. This article systematically appraises the poetic contributions of two main Chishti Sufi figures and explores the thematic elements of their works, and assesses their lasting impact on literature and spirituality. The Chishti Sufi Order, founded by Khwaja Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti in the 9th century, flourished in Indian Subcontinent under the guidance of Hazrat Moeenuddin Chishti Ajmairi (1141–1236).

However the role of the mentors and saints of the Chisti Order can be seen through historical lens of evolution of the Order and its successors' contributions. Hazrat Moeenuddin Chishti's mentor and guide Syed Usman Harwani was one of the leading Sufis who left a matchless impact on the personality of the his disciple, ultimately making him the torch-bearer of the preaching of the Sufi teachings and message of Islam in subcontinent. Chishti Sufis emphasized love, tolerance, and inclusivity, transcending religious and social divisions. They made use of poetry and music (Qawwali) as tools for spiritual enlightenment and the dissemination of Sufi thought. Unlike other Sufi Orders, the Chishti saints encouraged the use of vernacular languages and metaphoric expressions in their poetry, making their spiritual message accessible to a broader audience.

Literature Review:

Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975)ⁱ is a groundbreaking study in which she delves into the intricate and multifaceted phenomenon of Islamic mysticism or "Sufism". With her deep insight into Islamic studies and Persian literature, Annemarie Schimmel brings to her work a broad perspective on Islamic mysticism in her study, making this work especially noteworthy in terms of her insightful treatment of this topic in her scholarly style. The book discusses the emergence and evolution of Sufism, tracing its course from asceticism to more sophisticated mystical schools and philosophical systems. The book describes in detail various important concepts in Sufism, including "tawhid," or "unity of God," "fanā'," or "annihilation of self," and "wajd," or "ecstasy," illustrating how these principles form the basis of devotional practice. Additionally, it describes how poetry, music, and ritual are used both as a means and an end of mystical experience. One of the major strengths of this book is in its consideration of famous Sufi writers such as Rūmī, Hallāj, Ibn Arabī, and Attar, and how their work can be attributed to a variety of social and spiritual circles. Schimmel focuses on the universality and humanistic elements of Sufism in her work, which highlight how this school of thought can relate to all people at all times. Indeed, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* continues to be an invaluable resource for research scholars and students in providing a cohesive perspective on Sufism as a theological and cultural construct in the Islamic tradition. The literary beauty and analytical acuity of this work make it a continually relevant study in Sufi literature. But the Persian Chishti Sufis' poetic literature has not been given much place in this book.

Robert Rozeznal's *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty First Century Pakistan* (2007)ⁱⁱ is a pioneering, interdisciplinary study that re-conceptualizes how Sufism functions in contemporary Muslim society, particularly in Pakistan. Without cocooning Sufism within a static historical tradition, Rozeznal examines Sufism as a living, dynamic religious practice located within modern social, political, and cultural contexts. Focusing on the Chishti Sabiri Sufi order, the book fuses textual analysis of Urdu writings, ethnographic fieldwork, and historical research to present a deeply nuanced picture of how Sufi identity is articulated and lived today. Rozeznal starts by investigating the position of Sufism concerning identity politics and religious meaning within postcolonial Pakistan, with various responses to current events like the tragic stampede at the shrine of Baba Farid in Pakpattan, 2001, using it as a case study to elaborate on how modern-day disciples derive strength from their spiritual communities rather than state or civil institutions. Then he goes on to discuss three such biographies of modern Chishti Sabiri masters, drawing out how such figures have mediated modernity—a fusion of Western education and traditional spiritual authority. Importantly, Rozeznal brings into relief the manner in which the Chishti Sabiri order enunciates a vision of Sufism as pertinent to Islamic orthodoxy and how this contributes to national and transnational religious identities, while at the same time negotiating contemporary realities. Further, he examines rituals—from dhikr and samā' to 'urs mahafil—that have the effect of sustaining spiritual identity and social cohesion. *Islamic Sufism Unbound* strikes the enviable balance of theory and lived experience, giving scholars and students a nuanced appreciation of how Sufism adjusts and thrives at the turn of the millennium. But the poetic literature of Syed Usman Harwani has not been discussed

in this book.

Riazul Islam's *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society*ⁱⁱⁱ is a path-breaking work which analyzes the important role of Sufism in molding a social religious culture in South Asia in the fourteenth century. Riazul Islam refutes the conventional views written by earlier scholars which have described Sufism in South Asia during the fourteenth century either in terms of mysticism or in terms of fringe aspects of Muslim society in this critical stage of Muslim expansion in South Asia. Islam's work is based on a historical analytical methodology which utilizes available contemporary sources, like biographies (tazkirahs) and official documents, so as to assess accurately the influence of important Sufi saints, such as the Chishti, Suhrawardis, and Kubrawis, in Muslim society in regions such as Delhi, Bengal, and 'Deccan.' He shows how Sufi saints were not reclusive religious ascetics but rather social actors whose ideas influenced behavioral guidelines concerning religiosity, charity, and social cohesion. Their khanqahs or 'Sufi hospices' were established hubs of learning and conflict resolution which were instrumental in integrating Persianate Islamic culture with local South Asian culture. One of the most important elements of the book of Islam is the attention given to ethics and institutions in Sufism because of how Sufi orders facilitated interactions between upper and lower social segments in a way that impacted political power and social change. Additionally, one important element in the work of Islam is Sufi poetry and language. On the whole, this book provides a thorough and equitable evaluation of Sufism in such a way that it is an indispensable work for research scholars of Islamic history and South Asian studies but lacks in the elaboration of the poetic work of Syed Usman Harwani.

Islam in South Asia^{iv} edited by Waheed-uz-Zaman and M. Saleem Akhtar is a comprehensive historical study tracing the evolution and spread of Islam, its impacts on the societal roles across the South Asian region. Published under the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, this volume occupies an important place within South Asian Islamic historiography as it covers broad canvases—from early Islamic incursions to later cultural and political developments. It is structured to enable the readers to perceive the chronological and thematic understanding of how Islam took roots in the diversified cultural and political landscape across the regions that today include Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and neighboring areas. The work synthesizes contributions on social, religious, and political dimensions of Islamic influence, engaging with Muslim expansion, institutional dynamics, and inter-religious encounters. It reflects an effort to place Islam not just as a set of doctrines but as a lived socio-cultural force that interacted dynamically with pre-existing traditions and structures. Its comprehensive nature is further underlined by the volume's extensive bibliographical references and scholarly apparatus, turning it into a rich resource for scholars and students alike. While *Islam in South Asia* does not foreground a single authorial argument, the strength of the book lies in its panoramic historical survey and integration of diverse scholarship on the Islamic past of the region. It therefore affords a refined perspective on the historical changes that Islam has undergone in early patterns of conversion and imperial polity to the development of religious institutions and articulation of cultures. Overall, it is a basic reference to understand the many complex historical trajectories of Islam in South Asia but remains silent on the elucidation of poetic work of Syed Usman Harwani.

Dr. Fatima Hussain's *Sufism and Bhakti Movement: Contemporary Relevance*^v is an edited compilation of essays put together to highlight the important correspondences and connections between the Sufi and Bhakti Movements in South Asia. Based on a series of scholarly inputs during a seminar, this compilation aims to show how these two mystical ideologies have over time disrupted dogmatic religious beliefs, each in their own way representing a mystical ideology of a deeply humanistic tradition in one case based on Islamic mysticism "Sufism," and in another based on "Devotional Hinduism" "Bhakti religion". One of the main themes in this volume is complementarity, rather than contrast, in Sufi and Bhakti tradition, with a focus on their commonalities in terms of principles such as devotion to God, opposition to formal rituals, and longing for love and union with God. The contributors to this volume suggest that both Sufi and Bhakti presented a messianic moment

of relief to oppressed social groups in medieval Indian society, despite their differences in terms of caste, creed, and sect. The essays include a variety of themes such as the interplay of Sufi and Bhakti saints, their role in bringing forth devotional literature in regional languages, and social repercussions of their teachings in terms of cultivating tolerance and communal concord. Some important contributions include spread of mystic cults in different regions, influence of devotional music & poetry, and relevance in modern times in creating a peaceful environment and inter-communal understanding. The editorial guidance provided by Dr. Hussain in this context brings forth a volume that is a mix of different disciplines such as history, literature, and religious studies. In fact, this volume highlights that a comprehension of the common ethics in Sufism and Bhakti is essential in dealing with contemporary issues pertaining to religious conflict and social split. However the book does not give space to poetic literature of Syed Usman Harwani.

Research Methodology

Analytical method of research is applied to assess the historical and thematic appraisal of the literature produced by an early *Chishti Sufi* Syed Usman Harwani. This literature led to the promotion of the peaceful image of the Sufi Islam during medieval times which elevated and propagated the teachings and message of Chishti Sufi Order's saints to a transnational outlook and caused a universal theme of peaceful coexistence. This literature was used in the art of music especially in Qawwali and reached its zenith owing to its large following in subcontinent. The Chishti Sufi literature earned fame and got the attention of the maximum Indian audiences and transformed their faiths. For this current research, primary and secondary data is used which is collected in form of Interviews, libraries books and other sources. The strength of the research is however, the interpretation and thematic analysis through interviews of scholarly peoples and the original works of the *Chishti Sufis*, both in form of their *malfoozat* and autobiographies and poetic works. The secondary sources were of great importance and help for substantiating the arguments and information.

Syed Usman Harwani (1129-1220): Early Life History

Hazrat Khwaja Usman Harwani was born in the town of Harwan in Nishapur. According to another saying, Harwan was located in the state of Ferghana in Transoxiana (the land beyond the Amu/ Oxus River), which was lay between the Amu River and Syr Rivers in Central Asia. His patronymic title was Abu-al-Noor, contextually meant the Bearer of Light. He obtained the *Kharqah*-e-Khilafat (in Sufism *Kharqah* refers to the special cloak/robe or spiritual mantle that a Sufi master/*murshid* gives to a disciple/*mureed* as a symbol of spiritual connection, initiation into a Sufi order and transmission of blessings which shows that the disciple has been accepted on the spiritual path) of caliphate from Hazrat Sheikh Shareef Zandani, a well-known Sufi of his time belonging to Zindan (a famous town in the city of Bukhara).^{vi}

After achieving the *Kharqah*-e-Khilafat (the Sufi cloak of succession), he travelled to different countries and reached in the territories of the fire worshipers, historically associated with Zoroastrians or ancient fire-worshipping practices in Central Asian region. The people there were influenced by his character, turned to Islam and became Muslims. According to *Malfozaat* of Khwaja Saifuddin Chishti of Ajmairi, namely *Daleel-ul-Arfeen*,^{vii} he along with his disciple Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmair, visited many places including Syustan (the old name of Indus region, i.e. Sindh) and met Sheikh Sadruddin. From this narration, it is clear that Khwaja Usman Harwani visited different parts of Pakistan-at that time.

Khwaja Usman Harwani was one of the greatest Sufis of Chishtia Order. He was comprehensive in all spiritual external and internal sciences. He had no parallel in discipline and *Mujahida*^{viii} (refers to a person who struggles against the self/ nafs and worldly desires to attain spiritual purification). He was traveling most of the time for the sake of Islam. Once, the Caliph at that time forbade him from Qawwali and argued that if the Qawwali was permissible, Hazrat Khawaja Junaid Baghdadi would

not have rejected him. Since the Caliph belonged to the Suharwrdia Order. Some of the scholars and jurists were of the same opinion as the Caliph. Some gentlemen agreed with Khwaja Usman Harwani. In the end, the caliph ordered that anyone who listens to the Qawwali should be hanged on a wooden board and the singers in the assembly should be killed.

Hazrat Khwaja Usman explained that listening to divine secrets was one of the secrets that belonged to Allah and His servants. He stated that the Qawwali could not be kept hidden. No one could courage to stop it. He prayed and hoped to the Almighty God that only his disciples and children would be listening Qawwali till the Day of Resurrection and that none of among his disciples will be conquered ever by the people. When this answer got to the attention of the Caliph, he sent for Hazrat Khawaja to discuss with the scholars in the court. Provided, if the scholars agree, then he will withdraw his ruling. As soon as Hazrat Khwaja Usman Harwani arrived in his royal court, the Caliph was filled with awe and he got up and left. Scholars, after seeing the beauty and glory of Hazrat Khwaja and his piety and personality, hesitated, trembled, and all knowledge was forgotten.^{ix}

They asked to the caliph that they had forgotten everything when they saw the face of Khwaja Usman Harwani. They could not bear to argue with him. Finally, all the scholars and jurists fell at the feet of the him and said, "What is the possibility for us people who are against God, forgive us the charity of ourselves and the people of the Qawwali, and show mercy to us and be kind to our knowledge and do not take your blessing away from us?". He was merciful to all of them and prayed to Allah for them. When the Caliph saw this dignity of Hazrat Khwaja, he said that he will never stop him from Qawwali. He was fond of Qawwali. After his death in 1220 at the age of 91, Hazrat Khawaja Moeenuddin Chishti of Ajmiri compiled his *Malfoozat* under the title of Anis al-Arwah in 1186. He had four disciples who got the elevation to the level of his khilafat including Khawaja Moeenuddin Chishti, Khawaja Najmuddin Sughari, Sheikh Suri Mangohi and Khawaja Muhammad Turk^x. He was buried in Makkah.^{xi}

Thematic Impact of Sufi Poetry

The impact of Sufi poetry on human body and soul cannot be denied. This is a fact that different themes and meanings of the verses written by the Sufi poets influenced especially the hearts and minds of the sensitive human souls and public in general. The effect of beats and rhythms in music is an indisputably a reality which influences the human nature. Poetry with Music is a reflection of human nature. Creation of poetic literature, religion and message of *Faqar*^{xii} in the Indian Sub-continent is the evidence of this fact. The Sufis provided warmth to the sensitive and pure hearts of Indian society with a balanced use and combination of mystical words and melodious sounds. As a result, the union of poetry and music revolutionized the thoughts of public. Through the multifaceted and heart touching poetic couplets and verses and improvised into musical compositions of *Qawwali* and other native musical genres, the Sufi poetry left far-reaching impacts on Indian souls.

The depth and variety in poetic *ghazals* and verses especially written in Persian language by Chishti Sufis proved the facts of the universal phenomenon of the soul-touching impact of music and love which revealed not only on the human body but also on the inner beings of all Indians. Through the poetic excellence the Sufi like Syed Usman Harwani healed the burning hearts of his disciples and peoples at the same time. Through understanding the poetry of this saint, the flame of love of the disciples got more shine and spiritual heights. This was a peak time of the creative abilities of the Muslim nation. Through their poetic and practical deeds and actions, Sufis did not conquer the territories. They rather conquered hearts, minds and souls.^{xiii}

The Sufis 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 Hindus are 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, Qual-qalbana, Dhurpad, thumari and *Qawwali*, which can be credited as an evolution in the field of arts in Indian Subcontinent.

The saints and *sufis* of the *Chishtia* order, carried out the work of spreading Islam in the Indian subcontinent through poetry and music. The nature and quality of their work was very beautiful. ^{xiv} In sub-continent, 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 these *Sufis* and *Faqirs* of *Chishtia* order. Their 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 grace being the fore-father of *Qawwali* music in Subcontinent.

Analysis of Persian Poetry

Syed Usman Harwani conveyed his spiritual teachings through poetry. His poetic expressions often centered around the annihilation of the self and the ultimate union with the Divine. His Persian couplets, although few in number, deeply resonate with themes of spiritual ecstasy and divine love.

Persian Verse:

نمی دانم کہ آخر چوں دم دیدار می رقصم
مگر نازم باین ذوقے کہ پیش یار می رقصم^{xv}

Urdu Translation

مجھے کچھ خبر نہیں کہ آخر محبوب کو دیکھتے ہی میں رقص کیوں کر رہا ہوں لیکن پھر بھی مجھے اپنی اس خوش ذوقی پر ناز ہے کہ میں اپنے محبوب کے سامنے رقص کر رہا ہوں۔

Translation

"I do not know why, at the moment of seeing my beloved, I dance; yet I take pride in this exquisite delight that I am dancing before my beloved."

Word-by-Word Translation:

1. نمی دانم – I do not know
2. کہ آخر – that finally / why after all
3. چوں – how / in what manner
4. دم دیدار – moment of meeting / at the time of seeing (the beloved)
5. می رقصم – I dance / I am dancing

"I do not know why, at the moment of seeing my beloved, I dance."

1. مگر – but / yet
2. نازم – I take pride / I am proud
3. باین ذوقے – in this delight / in this pleasure / in this exquisite taste
4. کہ – that
5. پیش یار – before the beloved / in front of the beloved
6. می رقصم – I dance / I perform the dance

"Yet I am proud of this delight that I dance in front of my beloved."

Analysis (Conceptual)

1. (I do not know why) Indicates mystery or wonder at the natural reaction^{xvi} نمی دانم کہ آخر of the speaker to the beloved. There is a sense of spontaneity and uncontrollable emotion.
2. چوں دم دیدار (at the moment of meeting / seeing), Highlights the significance of the beloved's presence, which acts as a trigger for a physical and emotional reaction. The focus is on the immediacy of emotional intensity.
3. می رقصم (I dance) Symbolizes joy, ecstasy, surrender, and the embodiment of love. Dance here is both literal and metaphorical, representing inner emotional overflow.
4. مگر نازم (yet I take pride), Shows conscious self-awareness. The speaker recognizes and celebrates the joy and freedom of expressing love openly.
5. باین ذوقے (in this delight / exquisite taste), The term “ذوق” refers to aesthetic pleasure, refined taste, or deep joy, indicating that the dance is not merely physical but refined and cultivated, arising from deep emotional sophistication.
6. (before the beloved), Adds contextual significance: the presence of the^{xvii} پیش یار beloved enhances the value of the act. The performance (dance) becomes a tribute, declaration, or expression of love.^{xviii}

Thematic Analysis

This verse captures the ecstasy of love and the spontaneity of devotion. The poet experiences a physical and emotional overflow at the mere sight of the beloved, which he cannot rationally explain (“I do not know why... I dance”). Yet, this uncontrollable reaction is not a source of shame; rather, it becomes a refined pleasure, a conscious delight in expressing his love openly before the beloved. The act of dancing symbolizes both joyful surrender and aesthetic sophistication, merging the corporeal and spiritual aspects of love. In essence, the verse explores the paradox of involuntary emotional response and conscious aesthetic enjoyment. Love is depicted as a transformative force that compels both spontaneous expression and proud acknowledgment of refined emotional taste. The dance before the beloved becomes both ritualistic devotion and artistic celebration, highlighting the intimate interplay of ecstasy, aesthetic consciousness, and love's overwhelming power.

Persian Verse:

تُو قاتل کہ از بہر تماشا خون من ریزی
من آن بسمل کہ زیر خنجر خون خوار می رقصم^{xix}

Urdu Translation:

تُو وہ قاتل کہ تماشے کیلئے میرا خون بہاتا ہے اور میں وہ بسمل ہوں کہ خون خوار خنجر کے نیچے رقص کرتا ہوں۔^{xx}

English Translation

*“You are that slayer who sheds my blood merely for spectacle;
I am that blood-soaked victim who dances beneath the blood-thirsty dagger.”*

Word-by-Word Explanation

First Line

تُو – You (the beloved; in Sufi symbolism, often the Divine)

آن قاتل – That killer / slayer– Indicates the beloved's overwhelming power over the lover

–Suggests deliberate, public, unapologetic action –*Who, for the sake of spectacle* –^{xxi}که از بهر تماشا
In Sufi terms, the divine act is beyond human moral categories.^{xxii}

خون من ریزی – *You shed my blood*– Blood symbolizes:

- Ego-annihilation (fanā')
- Total sacrifice
- Ultimate devotion

Literal meaning of first line

You are that slayer who pours out my blood simply for display.

Second Line

من – *I*

بسمل آن – *That slaughtered one, blood-soaked yet conscious*
– “بسمل” refers to a being wounded unto death but still aware– Symbolizes the mystic standing between existence and annihilation

که زیر خنجر خون خوار *Who is beneath the blood-thirsty dagger*
– The dagger represents:

- Divine decree
- Painful trial
- The final act of annihilation

می رقصم – *I dance*

– Dance signifies:

- Ecstatic surrender
- Fearless acceptance
- Joy at the moment of destruction

Literal meaning of second line:

I am that slaughtered one who dances beneath the blood-thirsty blade.^{xxiii}

Analysis (Conceptual):

1. Beloved as Slayer (قاتل)

In classical Persian and Sufi poetry, the beloved is often portrayed as a **killer**, not out of cruelty but because love inevitably **destroys the ego**. The beloved’s act of killing is a **creative destruction**, leading to spiritual transformation.^{xxiv}

2. Blood as Spiritual Sacrifice:

Blood is not a sign of defeat; it is a **symbol of offering**. The poet willingly allows his blood to be shed, emphasizing **complete submission** to divine will.

3. The Dancing Victim (بِسْمَل):

The most striking paradox is the **victim who dances**. Dancing under the dagger represents:

- Transcendence over fear
- Ecstasy at the moment of annihilation
- Victory of love over survival instinct

This imagery aligns with the **ecstatic Sufi tradition** of Hallāj, where martyrdom becomes celebration.

4. Spectacle and Publicity (تماشا):

The act is performed openly, suggesting that **true devotion does not hide itself**. The mystic does not seek secrecy but accepts exposure, blame, and suffering as part of the spiritual path.

Thematic Analysis

This verse presents a powerful vision of **Sufi ecstatic annihilation**, where love, violence, and joy merge into a single spiritual experience. The beloved appears as a slayer who sheds the poet's blood openly and deliberately, emphasizing divine sovereignty beyond human morality. Yet the poet does not resist; instead, he identifies himself as the **بِسْمَل**, a blood-soaked being who dances beneath the dagger. This paradoxical image dissolves the boundary between pain and ecstasy, asserting that true love reaches fulfillment only through joyful self-destruction. By dancing at the moment of annihilation, the poet transcends fear and affirms a central Sufi truth: **death in love is not loss, but ultimate union**. The verse thus transforms suffering into celebration and martyrdom into aesthetic and spiritual triumph.

Persian Verse:

بیا جانان تماشا کن کہ در انبوه جانبازان
بہ صد سامان رسوائی سر بازار می رقصم^{xxv}

Urdu Translation

اے معشوق! آ دیکھ کہ جانبازوں کے اس مجمع میں بصد سامان رسوائی میں رقص کر رہا ہوں۔^{xxvi}

Translation

"O beloved, come and witness: among the throng of the devoted, I dance in the public square, bearing a hundred symbols of disgrace."

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

1. بیا جانان – Come, O beloved
2. تماشا کن – witness / behold / watch
3. که – that
4. در انبوه جانبازان – in the throng / multitude of the devoted warriors (or brave devotees)

Literal meaning of first line:

"Come, O beloved, behold that in the throng of devoted ones..."^{xxvii}

Second Line

1. به صد سامان رسوائی – with a hundred instruments of disgrace / amid total humiliation

سامان – means, instruments, or belongings

رسوائی – disgrace, public shame, or humiliation

صد – hundred (used metaphorically to indicate abundance)

2. سر بازار – in the public square / marketplace
3. می رقصم – I dance / I perform the dance

Literal meaning of second line

"Amid the crowd of devoted ones, I dance in the public square with a hundred instruments of humiliation."

Analysis (Conceptual)

1. (Come, O beloved, witness), The poet directly addresses the beloved, ^{xxviii} بیا جانان تماشا کن inviting them to observe his actions. This creates an intimate and performative tone, as if the beloved's gaze sanctifies the act of dance.
2. در انبوه جانبازان (in the crowd of devoted / brave ones), Indicates that the poet is among a community of lovers or devotees. "جانبازان" conveys sacrificial devotion or valor, emphasizing that his love is courageous and socially visible.
3. به صد سامان رسوائی (with a hundred instruments of disgrace), Metaphorical expression highlighting total vulnerability and public humiliation in love. The poet is consciously exposing himself to shame, yet transforms it into a medium of aesthetic or spiritual expression.^{xxix}
4. سر بازار (in the public square), Signifies complete openness and visibility. The poet does not hide his passion; he exhibits it publicly. This is a classic Sufi motif, where love entails self-abandonment and spiritual exhibition.
5. می رقصم (I dance), The act of dancing represents joyful surrender, ecstatic devotion, and aesthetic celebration. It symbolizes the fusion of body and spirit in love, even in the face of societal judgment.

Thematic Analysis

This verse reflects the paradoxical interplay of love, shame, and ecstatic devotion. The poet publicly exposes himself to humiliation ("a hundred symbols of disgrace") yet transforms it into a ritualized act of surrender and aesthetic celebration. By performing this dance in the market square and before

the beloved, the poet demonstrates that true love is courageous, socially defiant, and spiritually transformative. The multitude of brave devotees situates the poet within a collective of passionate souls, yet his dance is unique—an individual expression of ecstatic love that cannot be contained or hidden. The verse emphasizes that authentic love involves vulnerability, public exposure, and the conscious embracing of ridicule, turning what society considers shame into a medium for aesthetic and spiritual expression. In essence, the verse portrays love as both performative and sacrificial, a conscious act of joyful surrender, where the beloved's witness validates the lover's ecstatic state. The poet transforms public disgrace into aesthetic, spiritual, and emotional fulfillment, embodying a central Sufi motif: the beauty of surrender in love.

Persian Verse

اگرچہ قطرہ شبنم نیوئید بر سر خارے
منم آن قطرہ شبنم بنوک خار می رقص^{xxx}

Urdu Translation:

اگرچہ شبنم کا قطرہ کانٹے پر نہیں ٹھہرتا لیکن میں وہ قطرہ شبنم ہوں کہ نوک خار پر رقص کرتا ہوں۔^{xxxii}

Translation:

"Although the drop of dew does not settle upon the tip of a thorn, I am that drop of dew that dances on the thorn's tip."^{xxxii}

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

1. اگرچہ – Although / even though
2. قطرہ شبنم – the drop of dew
3. نیوئید / نمی نشیند – does not settle / does not stay
4. بر سر خارے – upon the tip of a thorn / on the thorn's head

Literal meaning of first line:

"Although the drop of dew does not settle upon the tip of a thorn..."

Second Line:

1. منم آن قطرہ شبنم^{xxxiii} – I am that drop of dew
2. بنوک خار – on the tip of the thorn
3. می رقص – I dance / I am dancing

Literal meaning of second line:

"I am that drop of dew that dances upon the tip of the thorn."

Analysis (Conceptual):

1. اگرچہ (Although), Introduces contrast or defiance, emphasizing the poet's exceptional state compared to natural expectation.

2. قطره شبنم (Drop of dew), Dew symbolizes purity, delicacy, and subtle existence. In Sufi poetry, it often represents the lovers' fragility or the ephemeral nature of life.
3. (does not settle upon the thorn), Highlights the impossibility or ^{xxxiv} نیوئید بر سر خارے difficulty—normally, dew avoids thorny, harsh surfaces.
4. منم آن قطره شبنم (I am that drop of dew), Self-identification with something delicate yet extraordinary. The poet's positions himself as rare, refined, and spiritually exceptional.
5. بنوک خار می رقصم (I dance on the tip of the thorn), Dance symbolizes joyful surrender, ecstasy, and mastery over precariousness. The thorn represents difficulty, pain, or worldly adversity, yet the poet's existence is elevated above fear or limitation.

Thematic Analysis

This verse explores the paradox of fragility and courage, delicacy and daring. While nature dictates that a dew drop cannot rest on a thorn, the poet metaphorically assumes the impossible, asserting spiritual audacity and ecstatic freedom. The “dance” on the thorn becomes a symbol of Sufi love and mystical daring, where the lover exists on the edge of danger yet embraces joy and surrender. The thorn signifies worldly trials, societal pressures, or the sharp edges of human experience, while the dew drop represents the poet's subtle, refined essence. By dancing on the thorn, the poet enacts a defiance of ordinary limitations, achieving beauty, transcendence, and aesthetic fulfillment. In essence, the verse embodies a core Sufi motif: the lover's capacity to transcend fear, limitation, and worldly norms through ecstatic presence and spiritual courage. It celebrates the fusion of delicacy with boldness, showing that love and devotion are not confined to comfort but thrive even in sharp, challenging spaces.

Persian Verse:

خوش آن رندی که پامالش کنم صد پارسائی را
 زبے تقوی که من با جبّه و دستار می رقصم^{xxxv}

Urdu Translation:

واہ وہ رندی کہ جس کیلئے میں سیکنڑوں پارسائیوں کو پامال کر دوں، مرحبا یہ تقوی کہ میں جبہ و دستار کے ساتھ رقص کرتا ہوں۔^{xxxvi}

Translation:

Blessed is that rindi (spiritual libertinism) for which I trample a hundred pieties; wondrous indeed is that piety wherein I dance clad in robe and turban.^{xxxvii}

Word-by-Word Translation and Explanation

First Line

خوش آن رندی

خوش—blessed, admirable, delightful

آن that

رندی—spiritual libertinism; Sufi nonconformity that transcends outward morality

“Blessed is that rindi (mystical nonconformity) ”^{xxxviii}

کہ پامالشی کنم

کہ that / for which

پامالشی trampling underfoot

کنم I do

“for which I trample”

صد پارسائی را^{xxxix}

صد a hundred

پارسائی outward piety, ascetic righteousness

را object marker

“a hundred forms of piety”^{xl}

Literal meaning of first line

Blessed is that mystical rindi for which I trample a hundred outward pieties.

Second Line

زیبے تقویٰ, زیبے تقویٰ bravo!, wondrous!, how excellent!, تقویٰ piety, God-consciousness

“How wondrous is that piety!”

کہ من, کہ that / wherein, من I,

با جبہ و دستار, جبہ Sufi robe (symbol of religious authority), دستار turban (symbol of orthodoxy and scholarly status)^{xli}

“clad in robe and turban”

می رقصم, می continuous tense marker, رقصم I dance

“I dance”

Literal meaning of second line

‘How wondrous is that piety wherein I dance wearing robe and turban’.

Analysis (Conceptual):

1. Rindi vs. Parsā'i (Inner Truth vs. Outward Piety)

رندی (rindi) in Sufi thought does not mean moral corruption; rather, it signifies **spiritual freedom, sincerity, and annihilation of ego**. **پارسائی (parsa'i)** symbolizes **formal, socially approved religiosity**, often associated with hypocrisy or spiritual pride. By trampling “a hundred pieties,” the poet **rejects empty ritualism** in favor of **authentic inner realization**.

2. Dance as Mystical Truth

Dance (رقص) here is **not physical frivolity**, but a metaphor for **ecstatic surrender (samā')**. Dancing while wearing **religious symbols** (robe and turban) **subverts conventional religious expectations**. The poet asserts that **true taqwa (God-consciousness)** is not rigid restraint, but **complete surrender to divine love**.

3. Irony and Spiritual Provocation

The verse is intentionally **provocative**: A man of robe and turban is expected to embody sobriety. Instead, he dances—**challenging orthodox moralism**. This irony exposes the **difference between spiritual authenticity and social religiosity**.

4. Sufi Ethics: Inner State over Outer Form

The verse echoes a central Sufi principle:

God looks not at forms, but at hearts.

Clothing symbolizes **outer identity**, while dance symbolizes **inner truth**. The poet unites both to declare: **true spirituality transcends appearances**.^{xlii}

Thematic Analysis:

This verse powerfully articulates a **core Sufi critique of formal religiosity**, contrasting **rindi (spiritual nonconformity)** with **parsa'i (outward piety)**. Syed Usman Harwani celebrates a form of mystical freedom so profound that it renders hundreds of conventional acts of righteousness meaningless. By proclaiming his willingness to trample outward piety for the sake of inner truth, the poet asserts that **authentic spirituality demands the annihilation of ego, not its sanctification through ritual**. The image of dancing while clad in robe and turban is deliberately paradoxical, exposing the hollowness of religious symbolism when detached from inner realization. Here, **taqwa is redefined**—not as restraint or moral display, but as **ecstatic surrender to divine presence**. The verse thus stands as a bold declaration of Sufi ethics, where **inner sincerity outweighs external conformity**, and where love-driven ecstasy becomes the highest form of devotion.

Persian Verse:

منم عثمان ہارونی کہ یارے شیخ منصورم
ملامت می کند خلقے و من بر، دار می رقصم^{xliii}

Urdu Translation:

میں عثمان ہارونی کہ شیخ منصور (حلاج) میرے دوست ہیں، مجھے خلق ملامت کرتی ہے اور میں دار پر رقص کرتا ہوں۔

Word-by-Word Translation:

First Line:

1. منم – I am
2. عثمان هارونی – Uthman Haruni (symbolic Sufi persona)
3. که – that / who
4. یار شیخ منصورم – I am the companion / friend of Sheikh Mansur (Hallaj)

Literal meaning of first line:

"I am Uthman Haruni, the companion of Sheikh Mansur (Hallaj)."^{xliv}

Second Line:

1. ملامت می کند خلقے – the people / the world reproaches / blames me
 ملامت – blame, reproach, censure
 خلق – people, society, crowd
2. و من بر دار می رقصم – and I dance upon the gallows / I dance on the execution scaffold
 دار – gallows, execution place
 می رقصم – I dance / I rejoice^{xlv}

Literal meaning of second line:

"The people reproach me, yet I dance on the gallows."

Literal Translation:

"I am Uthman Haruni, the companion of Sheikh Mansur (Hallaj); the people blame me, yet I dance on the gallows."

Analysis (Conceptual)

1. منم عثمان هارونی (I am Uthman Harwani), The poet identifies with a Sufi martyr figure, symbolizing spiritual courage and mystic defiance. Uthman Haruni, historically, is a symbolic persona representing devotion in extremity.^{xlvi}
2. یار شیخ منصورم (Companion of Sheikh Mansur / Hallaj), Hallaj represents the ultimate mystical love, often leading to persecution. By invoking this connection, the poet aligns himself with ecstatic and sacrificial devotion.
3. (the people blame me), Highlights societal judgment and ^{xlvii} ملامت می کند خلقے misunderstanding faced by the mystic or lover. The world sees his acts of love, devotion, or mystical practice as transgressed or scandalous.
4. و من بر دار می رقصم (I dance on the gallows), Dance here is metaphorical and mystical. It symbolizes joyful surrender, courage, and transcendence over death or societal condemnation. The gallows, normally a symbol of death or fear, is transformed into a stage of ecstasy and spiritual assertion.^{xlviii}

Thematic Analysis

This verse vividly portrays mystical courage, spiritual defiance, and ecstatic surrender in the face of

societal reproach. The poet identifies with Uthman Haruni and Hallaj, symbolizing spiritual martyrdom and ultimate devotion. Despite censure from society, he dances on the gallows, transforming a place of death into a theatre of ecstatic presence. The imagery conveys a core Sufi motif: true love and devotion often invite misunderstanding and persecution, yet the mystic transcends fear, embracing death, pain, and societal judgment as part of spiritual ecstasy. The verse celebrates the unity of courage, joy, and sacrifice, showing that spiritual love transforms even humiliation and death into aesthetic and mystical triumph.

Conclusion and Symbolic Analysis

Syed Usman Harwani's selected verses exemplify a **rich fusion of mystical insight, emotional intensity, and literary sophistication**, rooted in the classical Persian Sufi tradition. Across these lines, the poet navigates the **delicate interplay of ecstasy and suffering, love and fear, devotion and defiance**, creating a vision that is both deeply personal and spiritually universal. A central motif in Harwani's poetry is **dance**, portrayed as both a literal and symbolic act of surrender. From the ecstatic trembling at the sight of the beloved to the paradoxical dance beneath the blood-soaked dagger, movement becomes an expression of the soul's freedom and **an embodiment of spiritual ecstasy**. Dance serves as a bridge between **human emotion and divine experience**, transforming suffering, fear, and social constraint into a vehicle for transcendence.

Harwani's verses are marked by **paradox and subversion**. The poet celebrates being a **rindi trampling a hundred pieties** while dancing in robe and turban, highlighting that **true piety arises from inner authenticity rather than outward conformity**. Similarly, the image of the blood-soaked dancer beneath the dagger converts apparent victimhood into spiritual triumph. Pain, risk, and annihilation are thus reimagined as **aesthetic and mystical fulfillment**, reflecting Sufi ideals of **ego annihilation (fanā')** and **ecstatic union** with the Divine. Social and mystical visibility also recurs as a theme. By performing ecstasy and suffering before an audience, Harwani situates the mystic's journey in **both public and spiritual spheres**, emphasizing courage, vulnerability, and self-effacement. The poet further connects his experiences to a **spiritual lineage**, invoking his companionship with Sheikh Mansur, situating personal devotion within broader Sufi traditions of courage and love.

In nutshell, these verses reveal Harwani's **mastery in blending literary artistry with spiritual philosophy**. Ecstasy, paradox, suffering, and surrender converge to depict a soul in motion, transcending ordinary existence. Through his vivid imagery and daring metaphors, Harwani affirms that **true spirituality is active, risky, and ecstatic**, wherein love and devotion culminate in joyful surrender, and death itself becomes a metaphor for ultimate union with the Divine. In these verses, Khawaja Usman Harooni expresses the ultimate Sufi theme of divine love and self-sacrifice. By aligning himself with Mansur Al-Hallaj, who famously declared "Ana al-Haqq" (I am the Truth) and was executed for his mystical utterances, Harooni highlights the Sufi's willingness to endure worldly suffering and societal condemnation for the sake of divine love. The imagery of dancing on the gallows symbolizes transcendence over the material world and acceptance of spiritual annihilation (fana) in the beloved. Despite the public's criticism and the harshness of fate, the mystic remains in a state of ecstatic surrender, fully immersed in the divine presence, demonstrating the Sufi ideal of love that surpasses fear, pain, or death.

References

¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2006), 5.

-
- ⁱⁱ Robert Rozechnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbounded: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 11.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45.
- ^{iv} Waheed-uz-Zaman, *Islam in South Asia* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1993), 5.
- ^v Fatima Hussain, *Sufism and Bhakti Movement: Contemporary Relevance* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 2009), 19.
- ^{vi} Allama Alam Faqri, *Khawajgaan-e-Chisht* (Lahore: Shakir Publications, 2015), 300.
- ^{vii} Memon Abul Majeed Sindhi, *Pakistan Mein Sufiana Tehreekein* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2015), 221.
- ^{viii} Allama Alam Faqri, *Khawajgaan-e-Chisht* (Lahore: Shakir Publications, 2015), 303.
- ^{ix} Allama Alam Faqri, *Khawajgaan-e-Chisht* (Lahore: Shakir Publications, 2015), 301.
- ^x Muhammad Zakria, *Tareekh Maashaikh-e-Chisht* (Karachi: Ahmad Brothers, 1973), 164.
- ^{xi} Muhammad Zakria, *Tareekh Maashaikh-e-Chisht* (Karachi: Ahmad Brothers, 1973), 165.
- ^{xii} Hazrat Syed Ali bin Usman Hajveri, *Kashaf- ul- Mahjoob* (Lahore: Akbar Publishers, 2009), 44.
- ^{xiii} Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.
- ^{xiv} Muhammad Jehangir Tameemi, *Din: Faqar and Sama in South Asia* (CSAC: University of the Punjab, 2005), 6.
- ^{xv} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xvi} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xvii} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xviii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xix} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xx} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxi} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxiii} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxiv} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxv} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxvi} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxvii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxviii} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxix} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxx} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxxi} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxxiii} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxiv} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxv} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xxxvi} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxvii} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxviii} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xxxix} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xl} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xli} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xlii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xliii} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xliv} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xlv} Professor Dr. Riaz Majeed, Interviewed by author, February 15, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xlvi} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.
- ^{xlvii} Professor Dr. Sadat Ali Saqib, Interviewed by author, February 16, 2021, Persian verse translated by interviewee.
- ^{xlviii} Syed Usman Harwani (d-1220), Persian verse, translation by the author.