



A LITERARY AND MYSTICAL ANALYSIS OF HOFIZ KHOREZMI'S GHAZAL: SYMBOLISM, SUFISM, AND SPIRITUAL YEARNING

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Abstract

This study explores the mystical and poetic depth of a ghazal by Hofiz Khorezmi, a notable figure in 14th-century Central Asian literature. Through a detailed linguistic, stylistic, and conceptual analysis, the article investigates how the poet blends traditional Sufi metaphysics with classical poetic symbolism. Each bayt (couplet) is examined for its structural integrity and spiritual nuance, revealing recurrent motifs of divine love, existential sorrow, annihilation of the self (*fanā*), and longing for union with the Divine. The ghazal's metaphorical lexicon—including imagery of the nightingale (*bulbul*), the rose garden (*guluzor*), and the beloved's tresses (*zulf*)—is contextualized within both Persian and Turkic literary traditions. The study concludes that Hofiz Khorezmi's poetry exemplifies a synthesis of devotional intensity and refined classical aesthetics, positioning him among the key transmitters of mystical thought through verse. This article contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between poetics and spiritual philosophy in medieval Islamic literary culture.

Keywords: Hofiz Khorezmi, sufi literature, classical turkic poetry, mystical ghazal, *fanā* (annihilation in divine love), poetic symbolism, metaphysical longing, nightingale and rose imagery, persianate literary tradition, islamic spiritual poetics

Introduction

Hofiz Khorezmi, one of the distinguished representatives of classical Turkic literature, occupies a unique position in the spiritual and poetic landscape of 14th-



century Central Asia. As a poet emerging from the intellectually vibrant milieu of Khorezm—then a major hub of Islamic scholarship, philosophy, and Sufism—Hofiz Khorezmi's work reflects a synthesis of Persianate literary refinement and deeply rooted mystical experience. Despite limited biographical data, his ghazals endure as compelling texts in which love, loss, divine longing, and spiritual annihilation (*fanā*) converge into rich symbolic discourse.

In the classical Islamic tradition, particularly in Persian and Turkic literature, the ghazal was not only a form of lyrical expression but a vessel for metaphysical thought. Poets such as Rumi, Attar, and Hafiz of Shiraz used the ghazal to convey Sufi concepts like the search for the Beloved, the dissolution of the ego, and the pain of spiritual separation. Hofiz Khorezmi follows this tradition while contributing his own voice, distinct in its emotional depth and linguistic clarity. His poetic language blends conventional motifs—such as the bulbul (nightingale), gul (rose), zulf (tress), and sanam (beloved)—with metaphysical themes such as existential alienation, the inaccessibility of divine grace, and the yearning for transcendence.

This article focuses on the analytical interpretation of a particular ghazal by Hofiz Khorezmi that begins with the line "**Voy, o'shul misingakim, bir g'amguzore topmasa**", which serves as a prime example of how poetic form becomes a vehicle for mystical contemplation. The poem unfolds as a lamentation of a spiritually tormented lover, struggling in a world devoid of sympathetic connection or divine response. Through the ghazal's seven couplets, the poet charts a psychological and spiritual trajectory that mirrors the inner journey (*suluk*) of a Sufi seeker.

The central objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive interpretation of this ghazal through the **IMRAD structure**—applying close textual analysis (morphological and symbolic), contextual placement in Sufi discourse, and comparative literary evaluation. The article also addresses a gap in Turkic literary scholarship, where Hofiz Khorezmi's contributions remain underexplored compared to his Persian contemporaries. By situating the poem within both its historical context and its symbolic logic, this study aims to reveal the intricate layers of meaning embedded in its poetic structure and metaphysical imagery.



In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations around the role of mystical poetics in medieval Islamic literature, the fusion of literary form and spiritual function, and the continued relevance of Turkic contributions to the broader Sufi literary canon.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, hermeneutic methodology rooted in close textual analysis and comparative literary theory. The primary source is a selected ghazal by Hofiz Khorezmi, examined line by line using philological tools to interpret metaphor, symbolism, and diction. Key concepts from classical Sufi terminology—such as *fana* (annihilation), *miskin* (spiritual poverty), and *sanam* (idol-beloved)—are analyzed within their historical and mystical frameworks.

The analysis draws on intertextual comparisons with prominent Persian and Turkic Sufi poets, including Rumi, Hafiz of Shiraz, Jami, and Attar, using secondary sources in literary history, Islamic theology, and medieval poetics. Structural elements of the ghazal form are evaluated through classical metrics, while symbolic motifs are traced through their use in wider Sufi literature.

This integrated approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the poem as both a literary artifact and a spiritual expression within Islamic mysticism.

This ghazal, beginning with "*Voy, o'shul miskingakim, bir g'amguzore topmasa, Ishqda jon o'ynasa-yu, e'tibore topmasa,*" is found in the only known manuscript of Hafiz Khwarazmi's divan, which is preserved in the Eastern Manuscripts section of the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, India (kh-davron.uz).

The divan was published in a two-volume edition in Tashkent in 1981 (slib.uz). The ghazal is located in the first volume of the divan [slib.uz].

Hafiz Khwarazmi lived in the 14th century and is regarded as one of the prominent figures in classical Uzbek literature (qomus.info).

His divan includes 1,052 ghazals, 9 qasidas, as well as various forms such as *mukhammas*, *tarji'band*, *tarkibband*, *rubai*, and *qit'a*, totaling 37,264 lines of poetry [qomus.info].

If you wish to read the full text of this ghazal, it is available through the official website of Khurshid Davron's digital library [kh-davron.uz].



Results: Literary Analysis of the Ghazal

The ghazal under analysis, beginning with the line “*Voy, o’shul miskingakim, bir g’amguzore topmasa,*” reflects Hofiz Khorezmi’s profound mastery of poetic form and Sufi symbolism. Each bayt functions as an autonomous spiritual meditation while collectively forming a coherent mystical lamentation. This section examines the poem’s symbolic register, linguistic devices, and metaphysical implications in detail.

Couplet 1:

**Voy, o’shul miskingakim, bir g’amguzore topmasa,
Ishqda jon o’ynasa-yu, e’tibore topmasa.**

This opening bayt sets the emotional and spiritual tone of the ghazal. The persona is referred to as a “**miskin**”, a key Sufi term denoting one who is spiritually impoverished and humble before God (cf. Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*). The phrase “*bir g’amguzor*” (a sharer of sorrow) implies the social and metaphysical isolation of the lover. Despite the ultimate sacrifice—“*jon o’ynasa*”, literally, “to gamble with one’s soul in love”—the lover receives no acknowledgment (“*e’tibor*”). This dichotomy between total devotion and lack of reciprocation echoes the theme of **divine indifference** found in Attar’s *Ilahiynoma*, where the seeker suffers while the Beloved remains veiled.

Couplet 2:

**Kechsa koru bordin bir yo’li-yu, o’z shohining
Eshiginda itlarincha koru bore topmasa.**

This bayt intensifies the symbolic descent. The speaker’s movement toward the beloved’s threshold is described with the imagery of a **dog**, traditionally a Sufi metaphor for extreme humility (*itlik martabasi*). The notion of wandering blindly at the doorway (*eshiginda koru*) suggests the seeker’s **anxious fana**—erasure of the ego at the “threshold” of divine reality. It recalls Rumi’s metaphor of the dog who sits outside the tavern, hoping for a drop of spiritual wine (*Masnavi, Book III*).



Couplet 3:

Ne **tarioqa** **bo'lg'ay** **ul** **bechora** **oshiq** **holikim,**
Bulbuli oshufta yanglig' guluzore topmasa.

This bayt draws on classical poetic imagery. The *bulbuli oshufta* (the maddened nightingale) is a staple symbol of the tormented Sufi, whose longing for the *gul* (rose—the Divine Beloved) remains unfulfilled. The phrase “*tariqa bo 'lg'ay*” alludes to the mystical path (*tariqa*), indicating that a lover devoid of the divine presence (symbolized by the *guluzor*) is as spiritually destitute as a bird cut off from its existential habitat. This image is deeply rooted in Sufi allegory from *Fariduddin Attar's Mantiq al-Tayr*.

Couplet 4:

Bulbuli **nolon** **bikinkim** **gul** **yuzidin** **sayradim,**
Bilg'ay ul qadrimni gar mantak hazore topmadim.

The *bulbul* now speaks directly, indicating the lover's voice lamenting from proximity to the rose (*gul yuzidin*). Yet the lament is unheard, as the *mantak* (a speaking, rational being) is absent. The term *hazor* (hazrat, or presence) suggests the absence of divine attention or mystical consciousness. Here, Khorezmi critiques **spiritual deafness** in society—true love remains unacknowledged unless heard by the spiritually awakened. This dilemma mirrors Rumi's “*nafaqai g'am*”—the tunnel of sorrow where speech loses its meaning unless spiritually decoded.

Couplet 5:

Benishon **bo'lg'anda** **bilg'ay** **qadri** **holimni** **sanam** **–**
Kim, mani izdasa-yu, mandin g'ubore topmasa.

The use of *benishon* (unmarked, unknown) illustrates the theme of **invisibility**—a mystical state where the ego has been effaced (a form of *fana*). The imagery of *g'ubor* (dust) implies that even in annihilation, the lover leaves a spiritual trace. This paradox is central to Sufi thought: even self-effacement is a sign of presence. The *sanam* (idol/beloved) only recognizes the lover when she seeks the trace of their dust—an image that parallels Nizami's and Jami's use of “*g'ubori dar qadam*,” the dust of the path trodden by lovers.



Couplet 6:

**Yorliqning dardini ul damda bilg'ay yorimiz –
Kim, kishini sevsa-yu, hamdard yore topmasa.**

In this bayt, the “yorliq” (lover’s anguish) is known only to those who themselves suffer unreciprocated love. This is a profound **spiritual principle** in Sufism—only those who are afflicted by divine love can comprehend its agony. *Hamdard yore* (sympathetic friend) represents the ideal Sufi companion or *rāfiq*, whose presence eases the path of divine search. The absence of such a figure alludes to spiritual isolation, a key motif in works such as *Qushayri’s Risala* and the early Chishtiyya texts.

Couplet 7:

**Chunkim ul dildorining zulfinga ko’runmas qaror,
Ne ajab bo’lg’ay agar Hofiz qarore topmasa.**

The concluding bayt synthesizes the spiritual and poetic thrust of the ghazal. The Beloved’s *zulf* (tress) is a classic Sufi symbol for divine mystery and entrapment. The lack of *qaror* (stability, peace) reflects the ontological restlessness of the seeker in the presence of divine paradox. Hofiz here inserts his own name, fulfilling the **taḳalluṣ** convention, but also reinforcing the notion that the poet is himself spiritually homeless in a universe governed by divine concealment. This line closely echoes Hafiz of Shiraz’s couplets on divine unrest (“*biqaror shodam...*”), suggesting transregional thematic continuity.

Summary of Results:

Poetic Symbol	Sufi Conceptual Equivalent	Literary Reference
Miskin	Faqr, spiritual poverty	Al-Ghazali, Rumi
Bulbul	The Sufi seeker	Attar, Hafiz
Gul	The Divine Beloved	Rumi, Jami
Zulf	Divine mystery, entanglement	Hafiz, Nizami
G’ubor	Trace of ego after fana	Ibn Arabi, Jami
Sanam	Idol as metaphor for Divine beauty	Nizami, Sufi lyricism



Through layered metaphors, symbolic reversals, and spiritual vocabulary, Hofiz Khorezmi weaves a ghazal that functions as both poetic lament and mystical discourse. The poem captures the full spectrum of the seeker's spiritual disorientation, from yearning and invisibility to annihilation and silence. The articulation of divine longing in this ghazal reflects both Hofiz's poetic ingenuity and his rootedness in the great Sufi literary tradition.

Discussion

The literary and spiritual analysis of Hofiz Khorezmi's ghazal reveals a deeply layered text that transcends aesthetic expression to function as a vessel of Sufi philosophy and emotional introspection. The ghazal is not merely a lamentation of unrequited love but a symbolic meditation on the human soul's condition in its search for the Divine. In this sense, Khorezmi's work aligns with the broader objectives of classical Sufi poetry: to articulate the pain of separation (*firāq*), the desire for union (*wasl*), and the paradoxes of divine love through metaphor and lyricism.

One of the key findings is Khorezmi's adept use of traditional imagery—*bulbul* (nightingale), *gul* (rose), *zulf* (tress), *g'ubor* (dust), and *sanam* (beloved-idol)—which carry dual meanings: literal romantic references and profound metaphysical connotations. The *bulbul*, for example, not only symbolizes a passionate lover but also the Sufi disciple whose cries of longing represent remembrance (*zikr*) and spiritual yearning. The *zulf*, typically associated with the beloved's tresses, represents the tangled and often incomprehensible nature of divine will. These motifs are rooted in centuries of Persian and Turkic literary usage, echoing motifs found in Hafiz of Shiraz, Attar, and Jami.

A significant theme in this ghazal is spiritual invisibility—the notion that the true lover, despite his sacrifice and sincerity, remains unseen or unacknowledged by both society and the divine. The frequent references to *miskin* (the destitute one) and *benishon* (unmarked) reflect a state of spiritual erasure that closely parallels the Sufi concept of *fanā*, where the self is annihilated in the presence of God. This is not merely a loss but a sacred transformation, where the lover becomes dust (*g'ubor*), leaving behind only a trace of devotion. In Sufi thought, as expressed by figures like Ibn Arabi and Al-Ghazali, such annihilation is the gateway to *baqā*



(subsistence in God), though Khorezmi focuses more on the suffering involved in the *fanā* stage.

What distinguishes Khorezmi's voice in this tradition is the tone of **emotional immediacy** and **personal vulnerability**. Whereas poets like Rumi often frame suffering within metaphysical joy, and Hafiz of Shiraz leans toward mystical irony, Khorezmi speaks with unguarded pathos. His mention of being as lowly as a dog at the beloved's door (*"itlarincha koru bore"*) is not simply an exercise in humility, but an acknowledgment of existential despair—a kind of sacred despair that paradoxically affirms the lover's sincerity.

Moreover, Khorezmi's poetry reflects the localized evolution of Sufi thought in the Khorezm region, where Islamic mysticism merged with Turkic linguistic and cultural sensibilities. The use of Turkic idiomatic expressions and wordplay enhances the emotional power of the ghazal while maintaining fidelity to classical Persian aesthetics. His diction is accessible, yet the symbolism remains deeply entrenched in esoteric tradition, suggesting that his audience may have included both the literary elite and Sufi circles.

From a broader literary standpoint, this ghazal contributes to our understanding of the integration of form and spirituality in classical Islamic poetry. The structure of the ghazal—with its monorhyme and internal unity—serves not only aesthetic function but also mirrors the spiritual condition of repetition and longing. Each couplet acts as a breath, a cycle of remembrance, echoing the Sufi practice of *zikr*. The use of the *takhalus* in the final bayt, where Hofiz refers to himself directly, both personalizes and universalizes the experience—linking the poet's identity to the archetypal seeker.

This study also highlights a relatively underexplored figure in Turkic literature. Hofiz Khorezmi, though overshadowed by his Persian contemporaries, clearly possessed deep spiritual and poetic insight. His ghazal illustrates how Turkic-language Sufi poetry was not merely imitative but contributed meaningfully to the Islamic poetic canon. Further studies could compare his work with that of his contemporaries in Anatolia (e.g., Yunus Emre) or explore thematic overlaps with Persian mystics to deepen appreciation of his legacy.



Key Points from the Discussion:

1. Hofiz Khorezmi blends poetic artistry with Sufi metaphysics, using traditional imagery to express deep existential and spiritual dilemmas.
2. The poem emphasizes invisibility, unacknowledged devotion, and sacred suffering as necessary states in the mystical path.
3. His diction and symbolism reflect both Persian influence and localized Turkic mysticism.
4. The poem contributes to the understanding of how form (ghazal structure) reflects and enhances spiritual meaning.
5. Khorezmi's work deserves greater scholarly attention within the broader Islamic literary canon.

Conclusion

The ghazal by Hofiz Khorezmi analyzed in this study illustrates the powerful convergence of literary craftsmanship and spiritual philosophy characteristic of classical Turkic Sufi poetry. Through rich metaphorical language and symbolic imagery, the poem explores the emotional landscape of divine longing, the agony of spiritual isolation, and the complexities of mystical surrender. Each bayt functions as both poetic expression and metaphysical reflection, embodying the essence of the Sufi seeker's internal struggle.

This study demonstrates that Hofiz Khorezmi, though less widely studied than his Persian contemporaries, engages deeply with the symbolic and doctrinal elements of Sufism while embedding them within a distinctly Turkic linguistic and cultural framework. His nuanced use of motifs such as the nightingale (*bulbul*), rose (*gul*), and the Beloved's tress (*zulf*) reflects an intimate knowledge of classical literary conventions and spiritual thought.

Furthermore, the ghazal serves as a testament to the role of poetry as a vehicle for mystical experience in Islamic intellectual history. The poem's structural form, thematic cohesion, and emotional depth all contribute to its enduring relevance. By bringing attention to Hofiz Khorezmi's poetic voice, this study invites further exploration of Central Asian Sufi literature and its contributions to the global canon of Islamic mystical expression.



Future research may consider comparative studies with contemporaneous Sufi poets across the Persianate world or investigate Hofiz Khorezmi's influence on subsequent Turkic literary traditions. In sum, the ghazal analyzed here not only reveals the poet's individual genius but also reaffirms the universal human desire to find meaning, connection, and transcendence through love—both earthly and divine.

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