

kamāl-e garmī-e s'āī-e talāsh-e dīd nah pūch
baraṅg-e k̄hār mirey āīney sey jawhar khaiñch

Ask not
the end of ardent efforts
to seek the Beloved
Pull out
thorn-like
burnish-lines
from my mirror

Fran (Dr. Frances Pritchett) commenting on this distich in her lovely site "A Desertful of Roses" says:

"And the big question-how to put it all together? It isn't at all clear how we are to find 'objective correlatives' for the images. What is 'my mirror'? Is it my longing for sight (Nazm, Hasrat), my eyes or heart (Bekhud Mohani), or the 'foot of ardor' (Josh)? All these entities sit awkwardly with the idea of having polish-lines in them. And then, of course, to demand that the polish-lines be pulled out like thorns is itself a large and peculiar leap; why exactly (other than shape) are the polish-lines like thorns, and how are they to be pulled out, and by whom, and from what? Josh's idea that the mirror is really a foot is an attempt to account for the thorns, but of course it has major silliness problems of its own." Fran says that "It isn't at all clear how we are to find 'objective correlatives' for the images."

A poetic text is about something (its maẓmūn) and says some thing/s (its m'anī). Conventional, traditional maẓmūn's are indited with associated stock imagery, their talāzimāt, what Fran terms "objective correlatives" (T.S. Eliot defines an objective correlative as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked"). Over time and consistent usage, a maẓmūn's image becomes its semiotic-metonymic "shorthand," and specific images bring about and evoke the recognition and recall of specific maẓmūns. Images thus function as the "objective correlatives" for a maẓmūn. There can be theoretically the following permutations:

- 1) Old maẓmūn, old image;
- 2) Old maẓmūn, new image;
- 3) New maẓmūn, old image;
- 4) New maẓmūn, new image.

Rhetorically, poets can also "mix and match" and feint in the īhām mode by conflating the traditional "objective correlative" image "A" of a particular maẓmūn "X" with another maẓmūn "Y," which has its own particular traditional "objective correlative" image "B."

The connection between maẓmūn and m'anī is more fluid than that between a maẓmūn and its correlative image. One maẓmūn may have a single m'anī or multiple m'anīs (though in Urdu, m'anī is always grammatically plural) and one m'anī might be expressed through multiple maẓmūns. Determining a text's maẓmūn is framing it in a particular context. Many commentators frame this distich in the context of the Mirzā ṣāhib's lament on the lack of recognition of his poetic merit, but I've chosen not to opt for this frame.

In the nuskhah-e Bhopāl (reportedly in the Mirzā ṣāhib's own hand), the first hemistich was originally "kamāl-e garmī-e s'āī-e talāsh-e jalwah nah pūch." Rīza ṣāhib (who doesn't mention this lectio) dates this ghazal to 1821, during the Mirzā ṣāhib's "Bedilian" phase, in which he composed, in his own words, maẓāmīn-e k̄hayālī ("cerebral topoi"). Here's a distich from Mirzā 'Abd-al Qādir "Bedil" Dihlawī with which the Mirzā ṣāhib's text patently shares the lexemes "k̄hār," "āīnah" and "jawhar" and latently, "shikwah" and "gilā":

dar shikwah-e k̄hār ast gul-e ābilah-e man
īn āīnah-e ṣādah za jawhar gilā dārad

My
blister-flowers
complain
about the thorns
This
unburnished mirror
complains
about polish-marks

Prima facie, the Mirzā ṣāhib's text conflates two major maẓmūns of the Persian-Urdu poetic universe: that of frenzied love (junūn, the ur-symbol of which is the love-crazed Majnūn) and the Manifestation of the Divine Beloved (jalwah, the ur-symbol of which is Moses at Ṭūr). The first hemistich indites imagery conventionally associated with the maẓmūn of junūn, viz. frenzied wandering in thorny, brambly wildernesses. The second hemistich indites imagery traditionally associated with the maẓmūn of jalwah, viz. the intense desire to see, reflection, burnish/scratch-marks, mirror etc. The Mirzā ṣāhib's conflated the imagery and topoi of junūn and jalwah again:

yak alif besh nahīñ ṣaiqal-e āīnah hanoz
chāk kartā hūñ maiñ jab sey kih garebāñ samjhā

Mirror-burnish
still no more than
a single Alif
I've been rending my collar
ever since
I understood it

pā badāman ho rahā hūñ baskih maiñ ṣeḥrā naward
kḥār-e pā haiñ jawhar-e āīnah-e zānū mujhey

I, desert-wanderer
am sitting down
The knee-mirror's burnish lines
are to me
thorns in my feet/
The thorns in my feet
are
The knee-mirror's burnish lines

This distich appears in the Persian dīwān as well:

raftam az kār wa hamān dar fikr-e ṣeḥrā gardī'm
jawhar-e āīnah-e zānūst kḥār-e pā-e man

These are two contradictory topoi about the Beloved. The Beloved in the maẓmūn of frenzy is the Absent Beloved, the absentis carus whereas the Beloved of the maẓmūn of jalwah is the Hyper-Present Beloved. This seeming contaminatio of discordant topoi and imagery between the first and second hemistichs infuses this distich with a penumbra of "semantic split," a poetic flaw termed in Persian-Urdu rhetorical theory as "aib-e do lakḥt," where the two hemistichs of a distich lack "rabṭ," poetic coherence/connection and are hence termed ḡhair-marbūṭ. Therefore, Fran's very pertinent "big" question: how to put it all together?

The commentators diverge on the "objective correlative" of the lexeme "āīnah." The main similies (excluding the ones which compare mirror with the mirror of poetry, āīnah-e sukḥan) are comparing "mirror" with "longing for sight" (Naẓm Ṭabāṭabāī, Ḥasrat Mohānī, Yūsuf Salīm Chishtī, Suhā Mujaddidī, Muḥammad Bashīr Aḥmad Butt, Āghā Muḥammad Bāqir, Āsī Lakhnawī) or "soles of the feet" (Labbhū Rām "Josh" Malsiyānī) or with "eyes" or "heart" (Beḡhwud Mohānī, Qāzī Sa'īd al-Dīn). I'll take "longing for sight" (ḥasrat-e dīd) first. The first

hemistich speaks of the extreme kinetic frenzy of a desperate, passionate search, which sits rather ill with being compared in a similitude with "āīnah," especially since the idiom "āīnah ban jānā" means to be static and frozen due to amazement or bewilderment! Some of the commentators (Butt, Bāqir) posit the tertium comparationis (the wajh-e shabbah) between the longing for sight and the mirror being that of frantically running about in frenzied search which renders the persona loquens "ḥayrān," the traditional similitude of a mirror. "ḥayrān" from the Arabic "ḥayr" is "being astonished, confounded, bewildered disturbed"; "being dazzled." ḥayrat (also from the Arabic "ḥayr") is "being astounded, confounded"; "amazement, consternation, perturbation, stupor." All these states have to do with staticity, rather than the kineticity expressed in the imagery of the first distich. (Only!) Malsiyānī states that the "foot of ardour" has been called a mirror since it's been rubbed constantly and burnished into a mirror (pā-e shawq ko āīnah is liye kahā hai kih woh ghis ghis kar āīnah ban gayā hai). This accounts for the thorns, but as Fran says "it has major silliness problems of its own." Silliness apart, I'm afraid that there's no poetic precedent (ṣanad) from any precursor poet in support of this similitude! Beḳhwud Mohānī states that the mirror is the "mirror of the eye or the heart" (āīnah-e chasm yā āīnah-e dil).

I'll beg to posit that the mirror here can be posited as both eye and heart, in fact, the "eye of the heart," the oculus cordis, the 'ain-al qalb, the chasm-e dil. Gazing upon the Divine Presence, experiencing kashf (Revelation) and tajallī (Epiphany) is possible only through the spiritual eye, the eye of the heart. Both *tajallī* and *jalwah* are from the same trilateral Arabic root *JA-LA-WA*. *jalwah* is a Qur'ānic word, occurring four times in the Qur'ān in three forms- 59:3 *aljalā*; 91:3 *jallāhā*; 92:2 *tajallā* and 7:143 *tajallā*. From the same trilateral Arabic root is also *jalā*, "to become clear, evident, manifest"; "to reveal itself, be revealed; to appear, show, come to light, come out, manifest itself"; "to be manifested, be expressed, find expression." Al-Ġhazālī in the book of the Iḥyā 'Ulūm-al-Dīn entitled "the book of the revelations of the marvels of the heart" (kitāb sharḥ 'ajā'ib-al qalb) drawing on Qur'ān 83.14 (kallā bal rāna 'alā qulūbihim mā kānū yaksibūna: "By no means! On their hearts is the rust of their actions") indites the image of the rusty heart-mirror requiring burnish to be able to reflect the Light of the Divine. Burnishing the heart-mirror so as to prevent it from "rusting" in order to reflect the Refulgence of the Divine Presence is a major Ṣūfī poetic image. A "straight-forward" distich:

meḥw kun naqsh-e dūī az warāq-e sīnah-e mā
ai nigāhat alif-e ṣaiqal-e āīnah-e mā

Efface
the images of duality
from my heart's page
Your gaze
is my mirror's
Alif-burnish

If the "mirror" in the second hemistich is to be semantically disclosed as "heart-mirror," then what about "pulling out" the thorn-like burnish lines? As Fran says, this is "a large and peculiar leap; why exactly (other than shape) are the polish-lines like thorns, and how are they to be pulled out, and by whom, and from what?" The venerable commentators unanimously semantically disclose "sey" as an ablative postposition, meaning "of," "from; out of." Hence, "baraḡ-e ḳḥār mirey āīney sey jawhar khaiñch" has been rendered "pull out thorn-like burnish-lines from my mirror." Ancient mirrors were of metal and would require burnish to be able to reflect images. The polishing instrument would be repeatedly scratched on the metal's surface, which would leave burnish-lines called "alif-e ṣaiqal" since the shape of the burnish marks would resemble the Arabic character Alif. These burnish marks can also be compared to thorns due to their shapes being similar. The question still remains, however, what does it mean to "pull out" these burnish-lines? This part of the text is the most problematic part, prompting Josh Malsiyānī to compare the mirror to a foot from which the "thorn" may be removed! The imagery's extremely complex: a concrete act, burnish-lines produced on a metal mirror while polishing it is metaphorically equated with thorns, and these thorns are to be removed, pulled out, whereas, by contrast, burnish-marks are to be

“put in” the mirror. It’s possible to “solve” this “puzzle” by philology. The meaning of “sey” as an ablative postposition meaning “of,” “from; out of” is the most salient meaning, the meaning that’s processed the fastest in terms of psycholinguistics. This would be the m`anī-e qarīb, the “immediate” meaning of “sey.” “sey,” however, is bisemic, also being the oblique case singular of sā, “like” (as in mujh-sā, “like me” tujh-sā, “like you” etc.), which would be the non-salient proximate meaning, the m`anī-e gharīb. “jawhar khaiñch” would thus mean burnishing the heart-mirror, the actual physical act of burnishing being similar to “drawing” in the sense of “drawing” a sword, a pulling, elongated motion, or “drawing” an Alif (alif-e şaiqal!). Thus, “barañg-e kḥār mirey āñey sey jawhar khaiñch” can be rendered into prose as “barañg-e kḥār mirey āñey [jai]sey jawhar [apney āñey par bhī] khaiñch,” i.e., “mirey āñey sey” is “mirey āñey jaisey.” There are thus now two Actants in this distich, one interlocutor and this distich’s persona loquens. The interlocutor queries “What’s the end (i.e., the result) of ardent efforts to seek the Beloved?” to which the persona loquens replies “The Beloved’s locus is not outside the Lover, but within, being the Lover’s Heart. Burnish your heart-mirror even as I have.” Both hemistichs can thus be made to contextually cohere and this distich then evokes the Şūfī topos of waḥdat al-shahūd, the “Unity of Witnessing”:

Ask not
 the end of ardent efforts
 to seek the Beloved
 Draw thorn-like
 burnish lines
 Like those
 on my mirror