Alfaaz ki Mehfil

Select Urdu Poetry with
English Interpretation

Satya Prabhakar
With gratitude to those who made me...me:

My wife: Sangeeta

My parents: Anasuya & Venugopala Rao

My kids: Priya, Divya, Joe

My sisters: Suseela, Padma, Sai

My teachers, especially VVG, MJR & Dr. Sham Navathe

My partners / colleagues, esp. Param, Promod, Harish, Srin, Krishnan

My friends, esp. @RT84, Madras Club, Gators, Pink Flamingos, Summit, Group e4

My in-laws: Prasan Lata & Shambhu Nath


With thanks to those who helped Alfaaz ki Mehfil happen

Amir Ullah Khan
Umair Ullah Khan
Syed Moin Afroz
Shyam Sundar Vembar
Dev Prasad
Suresh Luthria
He is originally from Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Satya Vankamamidi Prabhakar graduated with a degree in engineering from NIT, Trichy. He completed his M.S. in Computer Science and an MBA in International Finance from University of Florida, Gainesville.

He was recognized as a Distinguished Alumnus by NIT, Trichy. He won the AT&T Cabinet Award & Honeywell Spirit for business and technical excellence.

He worked at Honeywell and AT&T in the US; before that, at Philips and TCS in India. He founded Sulekha with his wife Sangeeta Kshettry and serves as its CEO.

Satya was featured in 500+ media stories and was invited to speak at Wharton, Goldman Sachs, Nanyang U., NITs, IITs, IIMs & ISB. He published 50+ technical, business & general interest articles. He was published by Penguin in its anthology Black, White and Various Shades of Brown.

Satya serves on the Board of United Way (Chennai) and is a Charter Member of TiE. His interests include tennis, chess, investing, philosophy, writing, and drumming.

Sangeeta and Satya live in Chennai and have two daughters: Divya, married to Joe Silvestro, and Priya.

Satya can be reached at satyaprabhakar@gmail.com or via WhatsApp (text only) at +91 63812 93765.
You must pardon me for I am a rank impostor in the realm of Urdu poetry – with about 18 months of learning for about 15 minutes a day – and here I am with the audacity to release a book on the same.

The prime accused for this high crime and misdemeanor is my publisher Dr. Amir Ullah Khan, an economist/consultant from Hyderabad and an accomplished student of Urdu, who convinced me the charm of a book like this is exactly that: a novice filled with *mohabbat* for the Urdu *sher*, making it accessible to other unschooled *aashiqa*s (lovers) just like him.

Well, who am I to argue with an *Urdu ustad*! And this is how you find yourself reading this *Alfaaz ki Mehfil* with its uniqueness: a total lack of either erudition or scholarship, typically the hallmark of any book.

*Alfaaz ki Mehfil* is the faltering journey of an enthusiastic learner, presented with all its faults, warts and imperfect edges.

This *mohabbat* for Urdu got lit fortuitously during Covid confinement when my wife, Sangeeta, and I happened to catch an Urdu sitcom *Taana Baana* on YouTube. The ring of Urdu, just like that of Italian, sounded like music to my ears. I started to learn a few words a day. Soon, I realized that there is a better way: translate Urdu couplets into English and learn the words as part of that process.

And, *mashaallah*, did I hit a gold mine! The Urdu *sher*, I realized, is revealing, enriching, transformative, life-changing.

In many languages and cultures, poets devoted their intellect and creative energies to praise or appeal to the divine, portray
royal fiction, translate mythological epics, or in appreciation of nature, mostly.

Not so in Urdu poetry. Mostly agnostic, largely progressive, predominantly secular, unabashedly loving, innately rebellious, Urdu poets captured the essence of life with all its yearnings, enthusiasms, ecstasies, pathos, pains, struggles, trials, triumphs, and, flowing from all the above, transcendent wisdom.

Urdu poets observed life and captured the feelings and principles that hold true across time and space, both within ourselves and without. They had, for example, more interest in the relaxing, revealing power of a drink than in the imagined comfort of the divine.

Urdu poetry also emerged as the voice of revolt against religious orthodoxy, fundamentalism, injustice, despotism, and tyranny. It powered the Indian freedom movement and then turned its ire against oppression and authoritarianism.

The compelling beauty of the sher is that the poet’s learning of a lifetime is distilled and compressed into two short lines, expressed in supremely evocative and rich Urdu, a language synthesized from four remarkable languages: Khariboli (Hindustani), Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic.

As a student of Zen Buddhism and Stoicism, I found particular resonance with and striking parallels in Urdu poetry for two reasons: one, no axiomatic beliefs (such as God, soul, karma); two, observing life as is and figuring out how to make the best of it.

So, still investing my 15 minutes a day, I have been inflicting the translations of select couplets on my helpless hostages who suffered with a smile and encouraged me nevertheless: my wife, kids, family and friends, especially in RT84, my NIT, Trichy alumni group.
Alfaaz ki Mehfil is this compendium of couplets, curated and translated over the last 18 months.

Hope you enjoy reading them as much as I did in compiling them.

Satya Vankamamidi Prabhakar
Chennai, September 2022
satyaprabhakar@gmail.com
WhatsApp: +91-63812-93765
FOREWORD

I am very pleased to write this introduction to Satya Prabhakar’s Alfaaz Ki Mehfil book of his translation of more than a hundred and fifty selected Urdu couplets. A translator’s work has been described as someone who builds bridges between languages- with the literal meaning from the original ‘trans’-across; and ‘latio/latus’- ferry or bring- and Satya, in his book, manages to bring across the beauty of Urdu very well. In both prose and poetry there is a lot of debt owed to translations - and translators. One can readily applaud Samuel Putnam for his wonderful English translation of Don Quixote, possibly the first modern novel, written by Spanish author Cervantes.

Similarly the Mahabharata – translated from Sanskrit and the epic poems of Iliad and Odyssey, translated from Greek, and the Shahnameh, translated from Persian (includes the stirring exploits of Rustom and Sohrab) are other remarkable works enjoyed across the world. Rumi’s Masnavi – one of the greatest poems of the Persian language, is another example where it was Nicholson’s translation in eight volumes that has led to Rumi being such an oft quoted poet in all parts of the world.

Urdu poetry has also benefited from very talented translators ensuring those unfamiliar with the language are still able to appreciate the meaning of the ghazals and nazms of great Urdu poets. An example of a fine translation is how Khushwant Singh preserves the delicate similes in this wonderful quatrain from Faiz:

Raat yun dil mein teri khoyi hui yaad aayi,
Jaise viraane mein chupke se bahaar aa jaye,
Jaise sehraaon mein haule se chale baad-e-naseem,
Jaise beemaar ko be-wajhe qaraar aa jaaye.
At night your lost memory stole into my mind
As spring silently appears in the wilderness;
As in desert wastes morning breeze begins to blow
As in one sick beyond hope, hope begins to grow.

I am aware that there are other attempts by experts and scholars of this particular quatrain and my reason for mentioning Khushwant Singh’s effort here is precisely to highlight this particular truth— that there will be and should be an encouragement for all translators to carry out their art. Each one will bring out slightly different interpretations, and in their artistry will arrange the bouquet (of words and thoughts) in several beautiful ways. It is the reader who has the luxury of savouring each effort knowing that by getting to sample different translations they are that much closer to the sublime beauty of the original work.

While highlighting the importance and beauty of the translator’s work it is also important to look at the challenges that are faced by someone taking up the task of ‘creating the bridge’ across languages. Nabakov, who himself wrote in three different languages—Russian, English and French—summarises the difficulties of translating an author’s work after he translated into English Alexander Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin which was written in Russian—a novel in verse made up of 389 fourteen-line stanzas (5,446 lines!):

O Pushkin, for my stratagem.
I travelled down your secret stem,
And reached the root, and fed upon it;
Then, in a language newly learned,
I grew another stalk and turned
Your stanza, patterned on a sonnet,
Into my honest roadside prose—
All thorn, but cousin to your rose.
Nabokov goes on to say about the qualities of a good translator: he must have as much talent as the author he chooses. Also he must be well acquainted with the two languages involved and their places of origin and he must..‘possess the gift of mimicry and be able to act, as it were, the real author’s part by impersonating his tricks of demeanor and speech, his ways and his mind’...Certainly an arduous and challenging task this- for the translator.

Some examples to highlight, in the Urdu poetry context, of why knowledge of the language alone is not enough- a good understanding of the religious, historical and cultural background of the poet is also essential, is highlighted in the selections below:

Religious:

*Ik sarkhushi-e-ishq hai ik be-khudi-e-shauq*
*āṅkhoñ ko khudā jaane mirī kyā nazar aayā …*
*Qurbān tirī shān-e-ināyat ke dil o jaañ*
*is kam-nigahī par mujhe kyā kyā nazar aayā*

-Jigar Moradabadi

The tasawwuf poetry, as a genre, is difficult to translate. Here Jigar’s *ashaar* with the references to God in ‘tiri shaan-e-inaayat’ and his own condition of ‘sarkhushi-e-ishq’ and ‘be-khudi-e-shauq’ and the subtle ‘khuda jaane’ insert tie it all together as a great example of love for God that is enabling the poet to actually see the Unseen/ the invisible. Explaining this in the same brief manner of the *ashaar* in a different language is difficult, if not impossible.
History:

be-khatar kuud padā ātish-e-namrud meñ ishq
aql hai mahv-e-tamāshā-e-lab-e-bām abhī

- Allama Iqbal

To understand this couplet one would need to have knowledge of Namrud (Emperor Nimrod) and his aatish-e-namrud; and the story of Prophet Ibrahim and his love for God that enabled him to make the literary ‘be-khatar kuud pada’ jump. Again a brief explanation to someone not familiar with the historical context would be impossible.

Culture:

Qaasid ko pahle humne be minnat kiya rawaaN,
Saaman e jumla aish faraaham kiya yahaaN.
Aahat pe kaan dar pe nazar thi ke naagahaN,
Aayi khabar wo paaON mein mehndi laga chukey..

- Unknown

The ‘paaon mein mehndi’ cultural reference is a difficult one to explain for those unfamiliar with the pre wedding rituals that spell doom for the unaware poet above eagerly awaiting the arrival of his beloved.

An aside here- the Hyderabadi/Dakkani dialect would be a huge added problem to any translator of course! Woe betide the poor translator if very common everyday words like ‘parsun’ or ‘chup’ or ‘baingan’ are introduced by some mischievous poet in their ashaar! And worse if terms like ‘kisi ke baap ka kya jaara’ which bizarrely may translate (or NOT) to ‘who’s father, what goes’ are used!!

As seen above Urdu poetry presents several challenges for the translator. Another one that the translator faces, in common
with translators of poems of other languages, is the problem when translating the ghazel, of trying to maintain the rhythm / metre and the question whether rhyme should be preserved at all? While there can be different views I agree with James Ross (great translator of Persian poetry and translated Shaikh Sadi’s poem Gulistan in English) - who said “A translation, to succeed, must not violate simplicity on the onehand, nor sink into tameness on the other; and for this purpose a prose translation, even of poetry, is preferable either to rhyme or blank verse”. Satya Prabhakar, in his translation of the couplets remains faithful to the original text and conveys simple and elegant meaning of the couplets without venturing into rhyme or verse and thus fulfils Ross’s dictum above. An example of this is where he translates Fani Badayuni’s couplet (helpfully each translation of a couplet is followed by meanings of difficult / complex words so the reader has a chance to piece together in their own mind the sher in the best way):

**Suni hikayat-e-hasti to darmiyan se suni**
**Na ibtida ki khabar hai na inteha maaloom**

Heard the story of life but from the middle
Don’t know how it started nor know where it will end

*hikayat*: story, tale
*hasti*: life, existence
*darmiyan*: between
*khabar*: news, information
*ibtida*: beginning
*inteha*: ending, finale

Another difficulty with translating Urdu poetry is the question about which gender to use. A few examples here may help in understanding why this may be a complex issue:

**kab yaad meñ terā saath nahīñ kab haat meñ terā haat nahīñ**
**sad-shukr ki apnī rātoñ meñ ab hijr kī koī raat nahīñ**

-Faiz
In the 2 examples above it is fairly straightforward for the translator- the ‘tera saath’ and ‘tera haath’ can easily translate to ‘you beside me’ / ‘your company’ and ‘your hand in mine’. However in Faraz’s sher:

\[ \text{shiddat-e-tishnagī meñ bhī ġhairat-e-mai-kashī rahī} \]

\[ \text{us ne jo pher lī nazar maiñ ne bhī jaam rakh diyā} \]

The ‘\text{us ne jo pher lī nazar}’ is more complex- this could mean ‘when she turned away’ or ‘when he turned away’- however the \text{saqi} traditionally refers to a female- so safe to use ‘she’ here#. One could use for support Frances W. Pritchett who in her introduction to translations of Ghalib’s poetry states: ‘Choosing a gender for the beloved is one of the worst ordeals, when you set out to translate ghazals into English. No matter what choice you make, it can’t really be satisfactory. For the purposes of this commentary I have chosen to make the beloved female, whenever a choice must be made. One of the main reasons for this decision is practical convenience: since the lover and almost all other ghazal characters are male, making the beloved female means that she stands out.’ This doesn’t however quite help where the poet is female- like Parveen Shakir below:

\[ \text{na gul khile haiñ na un se mile na mai pī hai} \]

\[ \text{ajiib raṅg meñ ab ke bahār guzrī hai} \]

- Faiz

\[ \text{na gul khile haiñ na un se mile na mai pī hai} \]

\[ \text{ajiib raṅg meñ ab ke bahār guzrī hai} \]

- Faiz

\[ \text{rasta bhī kaThin dhuup meñ shiddat bhī bahut thī} \]

\[ \text{saae se magar us ko mohabbat bhī bahut thī} \]

\[ \text{is tark-e-rifāqat pe pareshāñ to huuñ lekin} \]

\[ \text{ab tak ke tire saath pe hairat bhī bahut thī} \]

The ‘\text{saae se us ko mohabbat bhi bahut thi’ could translate to both he / she as: ‘ but (alas) he / she preferred to be in the shade’.
However again there is help from Frances W. Pritchett when she quotes Bekhud Mohani: ‘In brief, only this much needs to be said (about gender references in the ghazal): that the beloved is the one whom the heart desires, and this is the basic principle. Many verses are such as to present praise of a male (beloved), and many are such as to present praise of a woman; and the largest number of verses are such that both man and woman can be used on appropriate occasions (as the beloved), and both aspects, human (majāzī) and divine (haqīqī) (love), can emerge. Thus it is that in Persian and Urdu poetry the beloved has been kept ambiguous (mub’ham), and ought indeed to be kept just so.’

An example of how Satya Prabhakar deals with the gender reference is in his translation of the following couplet, where the ‘be-hijab’ reference makes it less ambiguous:

**woh shab ko be-hijab jo mehfīl mein aa gaya**
**kyaa noor tha ki shama ko parvaana kar diya**

-Waheed Allahabadi

*when that evening she came, unveiled, to the gathering
oh, what a glow… that turned the flame into a moth*

*shab:* evening  
*noor:* light, luminescence;  
*be-hijaab:* without a veil  
*shama:* flame  
*mehfil:* gathering, assemblage  
*parvaana:* moth

Mr. Satya Prabhakar is a self confessed, self taught learner of Urdu language and must be lauded for his enthusiasm and hard work as much for his artistry. As readers browse through the book they will be struck by his excellent selection of Urdu couplets. The book itself is a literary fest which does well to highlight the work of Mir, Ghalib, Iqbal, Faiz, Faraz and also gives prominent place to a galaxy of the ‘lesser known’ poets. This is a great strength and a mark of Satya’s vast reading of Urdu
Shaayri. He has successfully managed to convey the meaning of the couplets very clearly and in the process has effectively navigated all the above mentioned complexities in translation. I have mentioned the translator’s work serving as a bridge between two languages- in addition, for the novice to urdu poetry, I think this book will serve as a piton, a useful device to enable the reader to climb uphill and venture into the wonderful heights of Urdu poetry. For the more experienced, expert Urdu reader this book will be a wonderful one to surf through and delight at the many well remembered couplets, rediscover forgotten ones and learn new couplets to add to their own repertoire of Urdu Shaayri - to be able to use at appropriate times and improve the quality of their text and speech. Happy reading!

Umair Ullah Khan
United Kingdom, 2022
uukhan@yahoo.com

UMAIR ULLAH KHAN

Umair Khan grew up in Hyderabad and is based in UK. He is a Paediatric critical care consultant in Scotland and teaches medical students at the University of Edinburgh. He has a keen interest in Urdu & English poetry and enjoys translating poems in both languages.
URDU: A DELICIOUS PACKET OF INDIAN COOKIES

If Urdu were a packet of cookies sold in a grocery store anywhere in the world, its wrapper would say: "Product of India." And, oh, what a delicious, nutritious packet of cookies!

Urdu is as Indian as Hindi is. Or Bengali is.

Nearly 50% of the global population speaks one of the Indo-European family of languages of which the most popular are: English, Hindi–Urdu, Spanish, Bengali, French, Russian, Portuguese, German, Punjabi. (Persian and Sanskrit belong to this family too.)

Of the Indo-European languages, about 75% speak a language that belongs to the Indo-Iranian (Indo-Aryan) branch of languages: Hindi, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Bengali, Pashto, Kurdish, Balochi, Gujarati, Awadhi, and, of course, Sanskrit and Persian.

Sanskrit and Persian are the two oldest Indo-Aryan languages. The earliest form of Sanskrit, around 1500 BC, used in the Rig Veda, was first recorded in inscriptions found not on the plains of India but in what is now northern Syria. Mitanni kings of that era there had Sanskrit names: Purusa (man), Suvardata (given by heaven). The first inscriptions of Persian are from 500 BC from what is today Iran. Both Sanskrit and Persian originated millennia ago, it seems, from the same geographical area of the world in the Middle-East.

Now, fast forward to the 12th century. Kariboli, also a member of the Indo-Aryan clutch, originated in Delhi and surrounding areas around that time within what is known as Ganga-Jamuna tehzeeb (culture), a poetic Awadhi phrase denoting the syncretic Hindu-Muslim culture, as reflected in the fused spiritual connotations, forms, symbols, and aesthetics. (Wiki)
Khariboli evolved into a more sophisticated Hindustani, gaining acceptance in the powerful royal courts along with Persian.

Khariboli, the mother, had two daughters, Hindi and Urdu, with two different fathers. Khariboli mated with Sanskrit to conceive Hindi; parallelly, it mated with Persian to produce Urdu. (Urdu, over time, also has absorbed words from Sanskrit and Arabic.)

Both Hindi and Urdu, like Bengali, were conceived and delivered in India. Interestingly, both the fathers -- Sanskrit and Persian – originated a long, long time ago from the same geographical area of the world in the Middle-East.

The grammar, structure of Hindi and Urdu are identical, and so is about 75% of the vocabulary. 25% of Hindi are Sanskrit words and 25% of Urdu are Persian words*. Urdu developed in military camps -- the word 'urdu' means a 'camp' -- when soldiers from different geographies lived and fought together.

Hence, Urdu is an Indian national treasure -- just like Telugu and Marathi are -- to be cherished and preserved, particularly for its most amazing poetry and the profound secular wisdom that Urdu poetry uniquely captures.

* Vocabulary difference examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>test</td>
<td>pariksha</td>
<td>intehaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sky</td>
<td>aakash</td>
<td>asmaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
<td>pyaar</td>
<td>ulfat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference</td>
<td>bhed</td>
<td>fark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concern</td>
<td>chinta</td>
<td>fikr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>near</td>
<td>paas</td>
<td>nazdeek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GHAZAL AND SHER: A FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION

A basic understanding of the structure of a ghazal and sher adds to the joy of Urdu poetry as it is the most popular form of Urdu poetry. (The following is drawn from various sources on the web and not based on any scholarly research done.)

- The history of a ghazal can be traced back to 7th-century Arabic poetry which evolved from quasida, an older pre-Islamic poetry, often written as a praise and a plea to the king.

- It then spread to and evolved into ruba’i in Persia (now Iran) to South Asia in the 12th century with the influence of Sufi mystics, growing into the current form of the hugely popular ghazal. The most popular being the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (1048 – 1131A.D.)

- The ghazal inherited the formal structure from the quasida which included adherence to a meter and complying with the quaafiya, the ending rhyme of each couplet. This structure A-A-B-A is explained below).

- A ghazal comprises between five to fifteen couplets or shers. What you get from or see, mostly, in Alfaaz ki Mehfil are these couplets drawn from larger ghazals.

- The structure for strict adherence is this: A-A-B-A (example below). The two lines of the first sher must end with the same word(s) and then the second line of every subsequent sher.

- The individual shers of a ghazal are independent but are connected, abstractly, to a unifying theme.
This A-A-B-A structure of the ghazal has become popular in multiple Indian languages, including Gujarati, Bengali, Telugu and others.

Let us look at the first three shers of Allama Iqbal's immortal ghazal where kya hai is the refrain; English translation follows.

(1)
khird-mandon se kya poochhun ki meri ibtida kya hai
ki main is fikr mein rehta hoon meri inteha kya hai
What will I ask of the wise as to where I have come from
My only concern is where I am going from here

(2)
khudi ko kar buland itna ki har taqdeer se pehle
khuda bande se khud poochhe bata teri raza kya hai
I make myself so strong that every turn of fate
God himself asks of his child...tell me what is it that you want

(3)
maqam-e-guftagu kya hai agar mein kimiya-gar hoon
yahi soz-e-nafas hai aur meri kimiya kya hai
If I am an alchemist myself, how does it matter where I am
I obsess in asking myself...what is unique about me
KEY MOTIFS IN URDU POETRY

Urdu poetry is not what it seems on the surface. Our enjoyment will be highly limited if we only take the literal meaning of the words and fail to catch their symbolic significance. An understanding of the metaphors is essential to enjoying the shers.

Here is a short primer on a few oft-recurring motifs of Urdu poetry and their typical metaphorical import.

*mohabbat, ishq, tamanna, arzoo*

- *Mohabbat* (love) with its various synonyms – *ishq, ulfat, junoon, unsiyat, qurbat* … so on – occupies a central role in Urdu poetry as the prime driver of all things great in life.

- To construe 'love' as just romantic love of a man for a woman, or vice-versa, would be silly and highly limiting. Love is for all things around us… people, skills, tasks, activities, even things. Anything that can make the heart sing.

- Without love, joy doesn’t exist. Without love, there is no quality in the work we do. Without love, life is effete, meaningless. It is the elixir of all existence. It is the power that propels us forward. It is what causes pain and also what helps us endure it. Love ennobles. It completes us.

- This has a rough parallel to the Zen principle of identifying and becoming one with what we do such that the line between the object and subject is erased. As Robert Pirsig, author of Zen in the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, implies: Love leads to caring.

>Caring leads to quality. Quality is Buddha.
- Love is filled with trials and tribulations but also with its share of triumphs. It is endless. Often unrequited and the object of love unattainable.

- *tamanna* or *arzoo* is the desire, borne of *mohabbat*, to attain the object of affection.

**aashiq, yaar, qaatil, qatl, koo-e-yaar**

- An *aashiq* is a lover. The literal meaning is one who is in love with another person. But again, that is a highly constraining interpretation.

- A broader interpretation is one who approaches everything with a sense of tenderness and affection. An *aashiq* has the earnest, ardent, eager mind of a child. For an *aashiq*, life is full of possibilities and endless wishes and things to do. Warren Buffet who said he taps dances to work and wants to retire five years after he dies, is surely an *aashiq*.

- The beloved is often referred to as *yaar*.

- *Qaatil* (assassin) is, ironically, the beloved, the one who kills the *aashiq* with her looks, her indifference, her separation (*hijr*), and, sometimes, with the union (*vasl*).

- *Qatl* is assassination, the killing; that’s correct, this is what a *qaatil* does to an *aashiq*.

- *Koo-e-yaar* (lane of the beloved) is the company of the beloved or object of affection.

**maikhana, mai, saaqi**

- The *maikhana* (tavern, bar) is a place where the *shaayar* (poet) goes to be transported to a state of ecstasy and blissfulness, blunting the tyranny of rationality, even if briefly. A haven where he can think for himself. Think different.
The *maikhana* sometimes is used as a metaphor for the world itself.

The enjoyment of *maikhana* and *mai* (wine) are also seen as ways to thumb the nose at the religious priests who cite drinking as *haraam* (prohibited).

The *saaqi* (bartender) is the ‘presiding deity of this temple of intoxicatedness’ and who serves the *mai*. For the poet, *saaqi* is one who listens to his aspirations, agonies and aphorisms patiently with empathy. Symbolically, often, *saaqi* also refers to the beloved or the divine. A life-giver, a *saaqi* offers solace, doles out gifts.

*aaina, aks*

*Aaina* (mirror) is the mind’s eye, metaphorically, in which we can see ourselves, observe and reflect.

*Aks* (reflection) is of ourselves as we observe ourselves.

*chaman, gulzar, gul, viraana, baghbaan, bahaar, barsaat*

*Chaman* or *gulzar* (garden) is life itself or a community.

*Gul* (flower) is the beloved.

*Viraana* (wasteland) symbolizes hopelessness, loneliness, and despondence in life.

*Bahaar* (spring) is rejuvenation, revival of hope, and the arrival of *mohabbat*.

*Baghbaan* (gardener) is used to refer to one who nurtures, helps growth.

*Barsaat* (rain) is used to refer to something good happening.

The enjoyment of *maikhana* and *mai* (wine) are also seen as ways to thumb the nose at the religious priests who cite drinking as *haraam* (prohibited).
**mehfil, shama, parvaana**

- Mehfil (gathering, party) refers to life itself and the world.
- Shama (candle) symbolizes the beloved, a junoon (passion).
- Parvaana (moth) is usually the aashiq who is helplessly drawn, yes, to the shama. Parvaana is typically a deewana (innocent, stupid, helpless) who sacrifices for the sake of his love.

**hijr, vasl**

- Hijr (separation): referring to growing apart from the object of affection.
- Vasl (union) refering to attaining the goal, joining with the beloved.

**safar, manzil, qaafile, karwaan, humsafar**

- Safar (journey) is the journey of life itself, often long and endless.
- Manzil (destination) is the union with the beloved, the achievement of the goal, often portrayed as an unachievable mirage.
- Qaafile, karwaan (caravan) is the society, the community in whose company we go through life.
- Humsafar (fellow traveler) is our companion in life.

**zaahid, waeez, mullah**

- The typical shaayar (poet) is a rebel, a free thinker, struggling with life surely, given to enjoying a drink now and then, and always fighting with religious orthodoxy and its suffocating constraints and edicts.
The words *zaahid* (pious person), *waiz* (preacher), and *mullah* (priestly scholar) are often used as symbols of religious authoritarianism.

**mahtaab, falak, sitaare**

- *mahtaab* (moon) is often compared to or is the beloved
- *falak* (sky) is the universe, life, world, and the unknown
- *sitaare* (stars) is sometimes used to reflect our aspirations
One of the interesting devices of a ghazal is takhallus. Takhallus is somewhat like the pen name of the poet, but not exactly.

It is a self-reference used by the poet to address herself / himself in the last sher of the ghazal called the maqta. (The first sher of the ghazal is called the matla.)

Some example takhallus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Takhallus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghalib</td>
<td>Mirza Asadullah Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firaq</td>
<td>Raghupati Sahay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zafar</td>
<td>Bahadur Shah II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir</td>
<td>Mir Taqi Mir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakir</td>
<td>Ganpat Rai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us take the matla (first sher) and maqta (last sher) of the famous ghazal of Mirza 'Ghalib':

**matla**

dil-e-nadaan tujhe hua kya hai
akhir is dard ki dava kya hai
o my foolish heart. what has happened to you
alas, what medicine for this pain

**maqta**

maine maana ki kuch nahi 'ghalib'
muft haath aaye to bura kya hai
i agree 'ghalib' is worthless
but what's the harm if you get him for free?
justuju jis ki thi
us ko to na paaya hum ne

is bahaane se magar
dekh li duniya hum ne

what i was looking for
i could not get

with this as excuse, however,
i got to see the world

Shahryar
1936 - 2012, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh
1987 - Sahitya Akademi Award
2008 - Jnanpith Award

justuju  
search, quest
paaya  
to gain, to secure
bahaana  
excuse
ankh bhar aayi
kisi se jo mulaqaat hui

khushk mausam tha
magar tuut ke barsaat hui

eyes welled with the
reunion of the loved one
after a long season of drought
the sky broke to rain down

Manzar Bhopali
1959, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

mulaqaat meeting
khushk dry, drought
mausam season
tuut heavy
barsaat rain
nigah buland sukhan dilnawaz
jaan pur soz

yahee hai rakht-e-safar
mir-e-karwan ke liye

lofty vision, heart-warming speech
soul on fire
this is all that is needed
from the leader of the caravan

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

nigah vision
buland tall, lofty
sukhan speech
dilnawaz attractive
soz burning, passion
rakht-e-safar needed for travel
mir-e-karwan leader of the caravan
itni shiddat se maine tumhe
paane ki koshish ki hai

ki har zarre ne mujhe tumse
milaane ki saazish ki hai

with so much dedication
did i strive and struggle to win you

that every atom of the universe
conspired to help me achieve it

Mayur Puri
1974, Ajmer, Rajasthan
neither our companions nor
our dear friends can help
the thorns in our feet
we got to take them out ourselves

Rahat Indori
1950 - 2020, Indore, Madhya Pradesh

humsafar  travel companion
humnasheen  dear friend
paanv  feet
kaanta  thorn
chal saath ki hasrat
dil-e-marhoom se nikle

aashiq ka janaaza hai
zara dhoom se nikle

let’s walk along...as wishes
spring from the heart of the dead

it’s a lover’s funeral procession
let it be with pomp and celebration

**Fidvi Lahori**

1729 - 1780, Lahore, Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hasrat</th>
<th>wish, desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marhoom</td>
<td>dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aashiq</td>
<td>lover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>janaaza</td>
<td>funeral procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhoom</td>
<td>blast, noise, uproar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mohabbat karne vaale
kum na honge

teri mehfil mein lekin
hum na honge

there will be no shortage
of those that love you

but in your celebration
alas, i won’t be there

Hafeez Hoshiarpuri
1912 - 1973, Hoshiarpur, Punjab

mehfil  gathering, celebration
agar baazi ishq ki baazi hai
jo chaho lagado dar kaisa
agar jeet gaye to kya kahna
haaray bhi to baazi maat nahi

if the gamble is of love
bet what you want, why fear
if you win, nothing like it
even if you lose, it is not a loss

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

baazi  gamble
ishq   love
haaray defeated
jeet   win, victory
zindagi gul hai
naghma hai, mahtab hai

zindagi ko faqat
imtihaan mat samajh

life is beautiful
with melodies and moons

don't think life is just
trials and troubles

Mohsin Bhopali
1932 - 2007, Karachi, Pakistan

naghma: melody
mahtab: moon
faqat: only, simply
imtihaan: trials, tests
ham ko bharam ne
bahr-e-tavahhum bana diya
dariya samajh ke kuud pade
hum saraab mein

doubt has turned me into
an ocean of superstition
thinking it is a river,
i jumped headlong into a mirage

Jawahar Nath Saqi
1864 - 1916, Delhi

bharam    doubt
bahr      body of water
tavahhum  superstition
dariya    river
saraab    mirage, illusion
zindagi yun hui  
basar tanha  
qafila saath  
aur safar tanha  

life has transpired  
as a lonely vision  

moving with the caravan  
but traveling alone  

Gulzar  
1934, Dina, Pakistan  
2002 - Sahitya Akademi Award  
2004 - Padma Bhushan  

basar  
tanha  
qafila  
safar
andar ki duniya se
rabt badhao ‘aanis’
baahar khulne vaali
khidki band padi hai

build a closer bond
with the world within, aanis,
to the world outside
the window is closed shut

Aanis Moin
1960 - 1986, Multan, Pakistan

rabt  |  bond, contact
badhao |  increase
khidki |  window
to whom will i complain, hayat,
about this life of desolation
i myself did not let my
aspirations live and thrive

Masooda Hayat
1956, Ayodhya

shikwa complaint
veeraane desolation, deserted, lonely
hasti existence, life
khud myself
tamanna desire, wish, aspiration
main akela hi chala tha
janib-e-manzil magar
log saath aate gaye
aur karwan banta gaya

i started alone
towards the destination

people kept joining
a caravan started forming

Majrooh Sultanpuri
1919 - 2000, Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh
1993 - Dada Saheb Phalke Award
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

akela alone
janib towards
manzil destination
karwan caravan
jaan leni thi
saaf saaf keh dete
zaroorat kya thi
muskurane ki

if the wish is to take my life
could have said so plainly
where was the need
to smile

Anonymous

jaan life
saaf saaf simply, plainly
zaroorat needs
muskurane mile
jise anjaam
tum samajhti ho

ibtidaa hai
kisi kahaani ki

that which you think
is the ending

is perhaps the start
of another story

Sarvat Husain
1949 - 1996, Karachi, Pakistan

anjaam        ending
ibtidaa       beginning
aashiqi se
milegaa, aye zaahid

bandagi se
khuda nahin milta

through love,
you will find, o priest

through worship,
you won't find God

Daagh Dehlvi
1831 - 1905, Delhi

aashiqi    love
zaahid    priest, pious person
bandagi    worship
maana ki teri deed ke
kaabil naheen hoon main

tu mera shauq dekh
mera intezar dekh

understand I am not
worthy of your attention

but look at my zeal
and at my patience

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

maana        agreement, conceded
kaabil       worthy
shauq         enthusiasm, passion
intezar       wait
be-takalluf woh
auron se hai

naaz uthane ko
hum rah gaye

she is friendly
with all others

only i am left
to bear her whims and airs

Fana Nizami Kanpuri
1922 – 1988, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

be-takalluf without formality
auron others
naaz uthana to bear with airs, indulge
hazaaron khwahishen aisi ki
har khwahish pe dum nikle
bahut nikle mere armaan
lekin phir bhi kam nikle

thousands of aspirations
each would consume a life
many desires came true
but still just not enough

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

khwahish: aspiration, wish
dum: breath, life
armaan: wish, hope
kam: less
umr-e-daraaz maang ke
laaye they chaar din
do aarzoo mein kat gaye
do intezaar mein

from this long life, I
got myself four days
two spent in wanting,
and two in waiting

Bahadur Shah Zafar (Last Mughal Emperor)
1775 - 1862, Delhi

umr  life
daraaz  long
maang  seek
arzoo  desire
kat gaye  spent
intezar  waiting
maazi-e-marhoom ki
naakaamiyon ka zikr chhod
zindagi ki fursat-e-baaqi
se koi kaam le

don’t anguish about
the failures of the dead past
make something useful
of the time that’s left

Seemab Akbarabadi
1880 - 1951, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

maazi  past
marhoom  dead
naakaamiyan  failure
fursat  leisure, time
baaqi  remainder, left
yeh na thi hamari qismat ke
visaal-e-yaar hota
agar aur jeete rehte
yahi intezaar hota

it wasn’t in my fate
to be with my beloved
had i lived longer, i would
only have waited in vain

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

qismat  fate, destiny
visaal-e-yaar  union with the beloved
jeete  living
intezaar  waiting
what is the sign
of a man of faith?

when death comes,
has a smile on his lips

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan
jaanta hai ki
woh na aayenge

phir bhi
masroof-e-intezaar hai dil

i know
she will not come

but yet,
my heart is busy waiting

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

masroof  busy
intezaar  waiting
manzil milegi
bhatak kar hi sahi
gumrah to wo hain
jo ghar se nikle hi nahi

destination will be reached
even if we stray a while

truly lost are the ones who
don't even come out of home

Anonymous

manzil
destination

gumrah
lost

bhatak
stray, meander

nikle
emerge, come out
Alfaaz ki Mehfil

**dekh zindan se pare**
**rang-e-chaman, josh-e-bahaar**
**raqs karna hai to phir**
**paon ki zanjeer na dekh**

look beyond the prison walls, at the colors of the garden, the joy of spring

if you wish to dance, don’t look at the shackles on your feet

**Majrooh Sultanpuri**
1919 - 2000, Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh
1993 - Dada Saheb Phalke Award
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

zindan  
prison  
chaman  
garden  
bahaar  
spring  
raqs  
dances  
zanjeer  
hackles
mausam-e-abr ho
suboo bhi ho
gul ho, gulshan ho
aur tu bhi ho

the season of clouds
a flask of wine too
the rose, the garden
and you too

Meer Taqi Meer
1722 - 1810, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

mausam  season
abr      cloud
suboo    flask, glass, pitcher
gulshan  garden
musafir hi musafir
har taraf hain
magar har shakhs
tanha ja raha hai

collectors of names
collectors everywhere
but each of them
travelling alone

Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi
1916 - 2006, Lahore, Pakistan

musafir traveler
shakhs individual, person
tanha alone
khudi ka raazdaan ho kar
khudi ki daastaan ho jaa

jahaan se kya gharaz tujh ko
tuu aap apnaa jahaan ho jaa

by being your own confidant
you become your own story

why so obsessed with this world
you become your own universe

Arsh Malsiyani
1908 - 1979, Jalandhar, Punjab
hasrat ye us
musaaafir-e-bekas ke roye
jo thak ke baith jaata
ho manzil ke saamne

hope we shed some tears
for that helpless traveler
who sits tired by the road
with his destination in sight

Mushafi Ghulam Hamdani
1747 - 1823, Amroha, Uttar Pradesh

hasrat  desire, wish
musaaafir  traveler
bekas  hardship, toil, trouble
manzil  destination
saamne  near
woh dil-nawaz hai, lekin
nazar-shanas nahi
mera ilaaj mere charagar
ke paas nain

my beloved is caring
but not discerning
the cure for my ailment
my healer doesn't have

Nasir Kazmi
1925 - 1972, Ambala, Haryana

dil-nawaz  caring, considerate
nazar-shanas  discerning, discriminating
ilaaj  treatment
charagar  doctor, healer
ab ke ham bichhde to shaayad
kabhi khwabon mein milen
jis tarah sukhe hue phool
kitabon mein milen

as we part ways now, perhaps
we may meet again in our dreams
just as we find dried flowers
within the pages of an old book

Ahmed Faraz
1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

bichhde disperse, part way
shaayad perhaps, may be
khwaabon dreams
sukhe dried
phool flower
kitabon books
kuch iss tarah se

guzri hai zindagi jaise

tamaam umr kisi

doosre ke ghar mein raha

Ahmed Faraz
1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

---

guzri        spent, passed

​
tamaam      entire, all

​
umr          age, years
kisi manzil mein bhi
haasil na hua dil ko qaraar

zindagi khwahish-e-nakaam
hi karte guzri

with no achievement in life did
my heart capture peace

my life was spent through a
series of unrequited desires

Qaisar Shameem
1936 - 2021, Hooghly, West Bengal

manzil  destination
daastaan  story
haasil  achieve
qaraar  peace
khwahish  desire
uske chehre ki chamak
ke saamne saada laga

aasmaan pe chaand pura tha
magar aadha laga

it seemed so plain
against the sparkle on her face

the moon was full in the sky
but it appeared to be half

Iftikhar Naseem
1946 - 2011, Lyallpur, Faisalabad, Pakistan

chehre  face
chamak  sparkle
saamne  in front of
aasmaan  sky
chanda  moon
adha  half
aaj dekha hai tujh ko

der ke baad

aaj ka din guzar

na jaye kahin

have seen you
after so long

hope the day
doesn't end

Nasir Kazmi
1925 - 1972, Ambala, Haryana

guzar

pass
gham aur khushi mein
fark na mehsoos ho jahan
main dil ko us mukaam
pe laata chala gaya

where the difference between joy and sorrow is not felt
i kept taking my heart to that place again and again

Sahir Ludhianvi
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab
1971 - Padma Shri
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

fark difference
mehsoos feeling, experience
makaam place
laata bring
justajoo ho to safar
khatam kahan hota hai

yoon to har mod pe
manzil ka gumaan hota hai

for the seeker
the journey never ends

though at every turn
the delusion of destination

Ghulam Rabbani Taban
1914-1993, Farukhabad, Uttar Pradesh

justajoo: quest
safar: journey
manzil: destination
gumaan: suspicion
zulmaton mein roshni ki
justuju karte raho

zindagi bhar zindagi ki
justuju karte raho

in deep darkness,
keep looking for light

all through life,
keep looking for life

Anwar Sabri
1901 - 1985, Delhi
zamane mein aaye hai to
jeene ka hunar rakhna
dushmanon se koi khatra nahi
bas apne par nazar rakhna

having arrived in this world
figure out the art of living
there is no danger from enemies
just keep a watch on yourself

Rajinder Manchanda Bani
1932–1981, Multan, Pakistan

hunar art, skill
khatra danger
nazar sight
akele to hum
pehle hi jee rahe the
kyu tanha se ho gaye hum
tere jaane ke baad

I was living by myself
even earlier

why am I now lonely,
after you left?

Anonymous
main apne saath
rehta hoon hamesha
akela huun magar
tanha nahi hoon

i always
keep myself company
i am by myself
but am never alone

Anonymous

hamesha always
akela by oneself, single
tanha alone, lonely
sau baar band-e-ishq se
aazaad hum huye
par kya karen ki
dil hi aduu hai faraagh ka

a hundred times, i have
broken free from the bonds of love
but what can i do...
for my heart is freedom's enemy

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

band-e-ishq  bond of love
aazaad   free
aduu    enemy
faraagh freedom, leisure
hum dard ka afsaana

duniya ko suna denge

har dil mein mohabbat ki

ek aag laga denge

I will make the world
hear the tales of woe

in every heart i will
light a fire of love

Shakeel Badayuni

1916 - 1970, Badayun, Uttar Pradesh

(when asked the purpose of his poetry)

dard    pain
afsaana story
duniya    world
mohabbat love
aag      fire
Alfaaz ki Mehfil

dil ki viraani ka
kya mazkur hai

ye nagar sau martaba
luta gaya

of this heart’s desolation
what’s there to say

a hundred times has
this city been plundered

Mir Taqi Mir
1722 - 1810, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

viraane desolation
mazkur mention
martaba times
luta gaya plundered
mere junoon ka nateeja
zaroor niklega

isi siyah samundar se
noor niklega

the results of my passion
will surely emerge
glowing light will spring from
the depths of the dark ocean

Ameer Qazalbash
1943 - 2003, Delhi

junoon  passion
nateeja  result, outcome
zaroor  surely
niklega  emerge
siyah  dark
samundar  ocean
noor  light
hearing the story of life
but from the middle

don’t know how it started
nor know where it will end

Fani Badayuni
1879 - 1941, Badayun, Uttar Pradesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hikayat</th>
<th>story, tale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hasti</td>
<td>life, existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darmiyan</td>
<td>between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khabar</td>
<td>news, information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ibtida</td>
<td>beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inteha</td>
<td>ending, finale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tu sirf dashna-e-nafrat
hi lahar aata raha

tu ne kabhi dushman se
lipat kar nahi dekha

you have only been waving
this dagger of hate

you haven't tried ever
embracing your enemy

Ahmed Faraz
1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

sirf      only
dashna    dagger
nafrat    hate
dushman   enemy
lipat kar embrace
yahaan har shakhs har pal
hadsa hone se darta hai

khilona hai jo mitti ka
fana hone se darta hai

everyone here is always
fearful of a calamity happenin
all of them toys... always
fearful of becoming dirt

Rajesh Reddy
1952, Nagpur, Maharashtra

shakhs   person
hadsa    accident, calamity
darta    fearful
khilona  toy (made of clay)
mitti    dirt, clay, earth
fana     sacrifice
dil na-umeed to nahi
nakaam hi to hai

lambi hai gham ki shaam
margar shaam hi to hai

the heart is not hopeless
just not sorted for now

long is the night of sorrow
yet, it is just a night (that'll pass)

**Faiz Ahmed Faiz**
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>na-umeed</th>
<th>without hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nakaam</td>
<td>without success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lambi</td>
<td>long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gham</td>
<td>sorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magar</td>
<td>yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is se pehle ki
log pehchane
khud ko pehchan
lo to behtar hai

before others
figure you out
better you
figure yourself out

Raghubeer Saran Divakar Rahi
1914 - 1968, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh

pehle before
log people
pehchane identify, figure out
khud yourself
behtar better
woh shab ko be-hijab
jo mehfil mein aa gaye

kyaa noor tha ki
shama ko parvaana kar diya

when that evening she came,
unveiled, to the gathering

oh, what a glow…
that turned the flame into a moth

Waheed Allahabadi
1829 - 1892, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

shab  
evening
be-hijaab  
without a veil
mehfil  
gathering, assemblage
noor  
light, luminescence
shama  
flame
parvaana  
moth
aane waali naslein

tum par fakhr karengi humasron

jab bhi unko dhyan ayega

tum ne firaq ko dekha hai

generations to come will
proud of you, my contemporaries

when they come to know
that you have seen firaq

Firaq Gorakhpuri

1896 - 1982, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
1960 - Sahitya Academy Award | 1968 - Jnanpith Award
1997 - Commemorative Stamp by India

naslein  generations
fakhr  proud
humasron  contemporaries
waqt ne kiya

kya haseen sitam

tum rahe na tum

hum rahe na hum

what a beautiful tragedy

time has produced

you have not remained the same
	nor have i remained myself

Kaifi Azmi

1918 - 2002, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh

waqt  time
haseen  beautiful
sitam  tragedy, disaster
rahe  remain
na jaane kis ki hamein
umr bhar talaash rahi
jise qareeb se dekha
woh doosra nikla

that which i sought
my entire life

when i saw it up close
turned out to be quite different

Khaleel-ur-Rahman Azmi
1927 - 1978, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh

umr bhar     life long
           talaash       search, quest
           qareeb       close
           doosra     other, something else
           nikla     turned out, came out
khud se
guzre to
qayamat se
guzar jayenge hum

if i can get
through myself
i can get through
any calamity

Meer Ahmad Naved
1955, Multan, Pakistan

khud  myself
guzre  pass, go
qayamat  disaster, calamity
mere taaviz mein
jo kaaghaz hai
us pe likha hai
mohabbat karna

on the piece of paper
in my lucky amulet
it is written…
just love

Swappnil Tiwari
1984, Mumbai, Maharashtra

taaviz        amulet worn for luck
kaaghaz      paper
likha        written
mohabbat     love
awaaz
bheed
shor
mushkil

voice
crowd
noise, clamor
difficulty, hardship

Alfaaz ki Mehfil

awaazon ki bheed mein
itne shor-sharaabe mein
apni bhi ik raae rakhna
kitna mushkil hai

in this crowding of voices
amid all this tumult and furor
to listen to your own voice
how hard it is

Naseem Sahar
1944, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan
itna to bata jaaon
khafa hone se pahle

vo kya karen jo tum se
khafa ho nahin sake

please, at least tell us this
before you get angry

what do those people do
who can't get angry with you?

Asad Bhopali
1921 - 1990, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

bata speak, tell
khafa anger, upset
pahle before
karen do
gham mujhe, hasrat mujhe
vahshat mujhe, saudaa mujhe

ek dil de kar khuda ne
de diya kya kya mujhe

sorrow, unfulfilled desires
craziness, passion, and frenzy

by giving me a heart, o god,
what all have you set me up with?

Simab Akbarabadi
1882 - 1951, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

gham         sorrow
hasrat      unmet desires
vahshat  craziness, madness
saudaa     frenzy
khuda       god
rau mein hai rakhsh-e-umr
kahaan dekhiye thame
naey haath baag par hai
na paa hai rikaab mein

this horse of life is galloping away
not knowing where it will stop
the reins not in my hand
nor my feet in the stirrup

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

rau  gallop, rhythm
raksh-e-umr  horse of life
thame  stay, stop
baag  reins
paa  feet
rikaab  stirrup
phenk de
khushk phool yaadon ke
zid na kar
tu bhi bewafa ho ja

throw away
the dry flowers of memories
don’t be stubborn
you be unfaithful too

 Tauqeer Taqi
1981, Karachi, Pakistan

phenk        throw
khushk       dry
phool        flowers
zid          obstinate, stubborn
bewafa       unfaithful
"sun ke saari"
"daastaan-e-ranj-o-gham"
"kah diya us ne ki"
"phir hum kya karen"

after listening to my entire story of sorrow and despair
she said
well, what can i do?

Bekhud Dehlvi
1863 - 1955, Bharatpur, Rajasthan

| saari     | entire, all of |
| daastaan  | story, tale    |
| ranj      | grief, hurt    |
| gham      | sorrow         |
kya kahen aur
dil ke baare mein
hum mulaazim hain
is idaara mein

what else can i say
about the heart

i am just an employee
in this organization

Kashif Husain Ghair
1979, Karachi, Pakistan

mulaazim  worker, employee
idaara   institution, organization
kitni deewarein uthi hain
ek ghar ke darmiyan

ghar kahin gum ho gaya
deevar-o-dar ke darmiyan

how many walls have arisen
within a home

the home is now lost somewhere
within these walls and doors

Makhmoor Saeedi
1938 - 2010, Tonk, Rajasthan

deewarein  
wall
uthi  
rise
ghar  
home, house
darmiyan  
amid, between, betwixt
gum  
lost
deevar-o-dar  
walls and doors
qasid, payaam unka
na kuchh der abhi suna
rahne de
mahv-e-lazzat-e-zauq-e-khabar mujhe

oh messenger, do not yet
read me the note she sent
let me for a moment be immersed
in the joy that she wrote to me

Asar Lakhnavi
1885 - 1967, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
1962 - Padma Bhushan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>qasid</th>
<th>messenger, courier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>payaam</td>
<td>message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mahv</td>
<td>absorbed, charmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lazzat</td>
<td>pleasure, joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zauq</td>
<td>expert, connoisseur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khabar</td>
<td>news, message</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mujhe khabar thi mera
intezaar ghar mein raha

ye haadsa tha ki main
umr bhar safar mein raha

i knew that those at home
were waiting for me

the misfortune was that i spent
my whole life out traveling

Saqi Faruqi
1936 - 2018, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh

khabar message, news
intezaar wait
haadsa misfortune
umr life
safar journey
ghazal mein bandish-e-alfaaz
hi nahin sab kuchh

jigar ka khoon bhi kuch
chaahiyae asar ke liye

just a string of words is
not enough to make a poem

you also need a drop
of your heart's blood for it to last

Anonymous

ghazal poem
bandish stringing
alfaaz words
jigar heart
khoon blood
asar effect, impact
dekh
raftaar-e-inquilab 'firaq'

kitni aahista
aur kitni tez

watch
the pace of revolution, firaq
how deliberate
and, yet, how swift

Firaq Gorakhpuri
1896 - 1982, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
1960 - Sahitya Academy Award | 1968 - Jnanpith Award
1997 - Commemorative Stamp by India

raftaar pace, speed
inquilaab revolution
aahista deliberate, slow
tez fast, quick
Alfaaz ki Mehfil

*hum aman chaahte hain*
*magar zulm ke khilaaf*
*gar jang laazmi hai*
*to phir jang hi sahi*

we desire peace
but by vanquishing tyranny
if what is needed is a fight
so be it…that fight is right

**Sahir Ludhianvi**
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab
1971 - Padma Shri
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aman</th>
<th>peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zulm</td>
<td>tyranny, inequity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khilaaf</td>
<td>against, opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laazmi</td>
<td>necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jang</td>
<td>fight, struggle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
hargiz raha na kafir-o-momin

se usko kaam

dil ne kiya qubuul

jab islam husn kaa

it becomes indifferent to
both the infidel and the pious

when the heart chooses
to accept the religion of beauty

Ghulam Hamdani ‘Mushafi’
1747 - 1824, Amroha, Uttar Pradesh

hargiz  in any way
kaafir  infidel, heretic
momin  religious believer, pious
qubuul  accept, adopt
islam  religion
husn  beauty
kis kis tarah ki dil mein
guzarti hai hasratein

hai vasl se zyaada
mazaa intezaar ka

so many kinds of unmet desires
keep coursing through the heart

but there is more fun in waiting
than there is in the fulfillment

‘Taban’ Abdul Hai
1715 - 1749, Delhi

hasratein  desires
vasl  fulfillment, meeting
intezaar  waiting
nahin tera nasheman
qasr-e-sultani ke gumbad par
tu shaheen hai basera kar
pahaadon ki chattanon mein

your place is not on
the dome of the royal palace

you are an eagle, find your
place on the rocks of the mountain

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Punjab

nasheman  home, residence
qasr-e-sultani  palace of royals
gumbad  dome
shaheen  falcon, eagle
basera  rest
chattanon  rocks
zaahid, sharaab peene de
masjid mein baith kar

ya wo jagah bata de
jahaan par khuda na ho

oh priest, allow me to drink
sitting here in the mosque
or, show me a place
where there is no god

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

zaahid — priest
sharaab — wine, liquor
masjid — mosque
jagah — place
bata de — tell me, show me
khuda — god
achchha hai dil ke saath
rahe paasbaan-e-aqal

lekin kabhi kabhi ise
tanha bhi chod de

it's good that your mind
stands guard to the heart

but, on occasion,
do leave the heart alone

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

paasbaan  guard, sentinel
aqal, aql  mind, intellect
tanhaa   alone
chod     to leave
muskuraahat hai
husn ka zevar
muskuraana na
bhuul jaaya karo

smile is
beauty’s treasure
don’t forget
to keep smiling

Abdul Hamid ‘Adam’
1909 - 1981, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan

muskuraahat  smile
husn      beauty
zevar    jewelry, ornament, treasure
bhuul    forget
sheikh saahab sey
rasm-o-raah na kee

shukr hai zindagi
tabaah na kee

i didn’t have the priest
perform rituals and customs

happy that i didn’t
waste my life thus

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

sheikh
head, priest, learned man
rasm-o-raah
customs and traditions
shukr
happiness, gratitude
tabaah
wasted, ruined
woh kare baat toh
har lafz se khushboo aaye

aisi boli wohi bole
jise urdu aaye

when she speaks, from every word
a delightful fragrance

she speaks like those
who know urdu

Ahmad Wasi
1943, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh

lafz  word, syllable
khushboo  fragrance
mere raahbar, mujh ko

gumrah kar de

suna hai ki manzil
qareeb aa gayi hai

my guide,
lead me astray

heard that my destination
has drawn closer

Khumar Barabankavi
1919 - 1999, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

raahbar  guide, leader
gumrah  lost
manzil    destination
qareeb  near
there is nothing lacking
in intellect and reason
but you still need
a touch of madness

**Firaq Gorakhpuri**
1896 - 1982, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
1960 - Sahitya Academy Award | 1968 - Jnanpith Award
1997 - Commemorative Stamp by India

- **aql** intellect
- **divangi** madness
- **darkaar** necessary required
'jamaal' har shehar se hai pyaara
vo shehar mujh ko
jahaan se dekha tha
pehli baar aasmaan main ne

jamaal, of all the cities
that city is dear to me
from where i saw the sky
for the first time

Jamaal Ehsani
1951 - 1998, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

shehar  city
pyaara  beloved
pehli baar  for the first time
aasmaan  sky
‘bedaar’ raah-e-ishq
kisi se na tai hui

sahraa mein ‘qais’
koh mein ‘farhaad’ rah gaya

in the path of love, bedaar,
who ever attains his goal?

majnu remained in the wilderness
and farhad in the mountains

Meer Mohammadi Bedaar
1732 - 1797, Delhi

raah-e-ishq path of love
tai traverse, pass through
qais another name for Majnu
sahraa wilderness, desert
koh mountain

Majnu and Farhad are two lovers of legend.
hum parvarish-e-lauh-o-qalam
karte rahenge

jo dil pe guzarti hai raqam
karte rahenge

we will keep nurturing
the pen and the paper

we will continue to capture
that which flows through our heart

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

parvarish: nurturing, bringing up
lauh: tablet, board, paper
qalam: pen
guzarti: passes through
raqam: chronicle
nahi nigah mein manzil
to justaju hi sahi

nahi visaal mayassar
to arzoo hi sahi

if the destination is not in sight
the quest is the way

if union with the beloved is not possible
just the desire is the way

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

nigah         sight, vision
manzil        destination, goal
justaju       quest, search
visaal        union
mayassar      possible, available
arzoo         desire
hoti kahan hai dil se judaa
dil ki aarzoo

jaata kahan hai shama ko
parvaana chhod kar

where does the heart
separate from its own desires?

where does the moth go
leaving the flame behind?

Jaleel Manikpuri
1866 - 1946, Manikpur, Uttar Pradesh

aarzoo  desire
judaa  separated
shama  flame
parvaana  moth
ye roshni tere kamre
mein khud nahi aayi

shama ka jism pighalne
ke baad aayi hai

this light hasn’t come into
your room all by itself
it has come after burning
the body of a candle

Indira Varma
1940, Delhi
meri allah se bas
itni dua hai rashid
main jo urdu mein
wasiyat likhoon, beta padhle

of god, rashid has
just this small prayer
when i write my will in urdu
my son can read it

Rashid Arfi
1943 , Dehradun, Uttarakhand

dua personal prayer, supplication
wasiyat will (of inheritance)
dhoop ne guzaarish ki
ek boond baarish ki

the searing sunlight
sought a drop of water

Mohammed Alvi
1927 - 2018, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

dhoop  sunlight, heat
 guzaarish  request
 boond  drop
 baarish  rain
sadiyon se zamaane ka
ye Andaaz rahaa hai
saaya bhi juda ho gaya
jab waqt pada hai

for ages
it has been this way
even your shadow leaves
when bad times fall

Jamill Murssapuri
1931, Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh

sadiyon ages
andaaz style, mannerism
saaya shadow
juda separate, leave
waqt time
the kids were fighting in the neighborhood, not sure about what it was such a relief that there was neither the mention of temple nor mosque
jab kaha maine ki
tum bedaadgar na-aashnaa
be-mohabbat bewafa
begana-e-ahbab ho
to phir usne hans ke farmaya
ki main jo hoon so hoon
tum bhee to bechain ho
besabr ho, betaab ho

when i told her...
you are unfair, act unfamiliar,
with no love, unfaithful,
a strange friend indeed

she replied with a smile
i am what i am
you too are anxious, impatient
and oh so restless

Momin Khan Momin
1801 - 1852, Delhi
when you mentioned Kolkata
oh my dear friend
you shot an arrow
straight into my heart

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

zikr to mention, think of
humnasheen dear friend
teer arrow
seen heart
You mistake a gesture of formality
for sincere affection, 'faraz'
not every one who shakes your hand
is a friend

**Ahmed Faraz**
1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

| **takalluf** | formality |
| **ikhlas** | sincerity |
| **samajhna** | understand |
agar dard-e-mohabbat se
na insaan aashna hota
na kuchh marne ka gham hota
na jeene ka maza hota

if one is not familiar
with the pain of love
he feels neither the sadness
of death nor the joy of life

Chakbast Brij Narayan
1882 - 1926, Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh

aashna  familiar, friend
dard    pain
gham    sorrow
mazaa   joy
khuda bachaye tere
mast mast aankhon se
farishta ho to behak jaaye
aadmi kya hai

god help us with
your intoxicating eyes
those than can get angels drunk
what hope does a man have

Khumar Barabankavi
1919 - 1999, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

bachaye  save
behak   drunk
farishta angel
ishq par zor nahin
hai ye wo aatish, ghalib

ki lagaye na lage
aur bujhaye na bane

we have no power over love,
it is a burning fire, ghalib

lights up without being lit, and
once lit, can’t be extinguished

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle
no craving for appreciation
nor a concern for reward
if my words makes no sense
it is what it is

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle
koi aisi dava de,
chaaragar
bhool jaaun main
aashna chehre ko

give me medication,
dear doctor
that let's me forget
my lover's face

Nishanth Shrivastava ‘Nayab’
1977, Mumbai, Maharashtra

chaaragara       doctor
ashna            lover
chehre           countenance, face
mohabbat ko samajhna hai to
naaseh khud mohabbat kar

to understand love
you should first fall in love

kinaare se kabhi
andaaza-e-toofan nahi hota

from the shore, how can you
ever get a sense of the storm

Khumar Barabankavi
1919 - 1999, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

kinaare  
shore

andaaz  
estimate, experience

atoofan  
storm
humko maloom hai
jannat ki haqeeqat lekin
dil ke khush rakhne ko 'ghalib'
yeh khayaal achchha hai

i do understand
the truth about heaven, but
to keep my heart happy, ghalib
it is a comforting thought

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

jannat  heaven
haqeeqat  reality, fact
khush  happy
khayaal  thought
woh afsaana jise anjaam tak
lana na ho mumkin

use ek khoobsurat mod
de kar chodna achcha

where not possible to find
the story a fine ending
it is best to find a beautiful turn
and leave it there with grace

Sahir Ludhianvi
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab
1971 - Padma Shri
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

afsana   story, tale
anjaam   result, end, completion
mumkin   possible
mod      turn
aqaa’ed vahm hai mazhab
khayaal-e-khaam hai saaqi
azal se aql-e-insaan
basta-e-auhaam hai saaqi

religion is a superstitious belief
a regressive thought, my friend

forever the human mind
has thus been held captive

Sahir Ludhianvi
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab
1971 - Padma Shri
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

vahm    superstition
mazhab  religion
khaam   stray, meander
nikle   emerge, come out
donon laazim hai
laa-zawal bhi hain

ek tera husn
ek mera ye ishq

both are essential
and both everlasting
one, your beauty
and this love of mine

Farhat Abbas
1956, Lahor, Pakistan

laazim
necessary

la-zawal
everlasting, imperishable
raste mein mil gaya to
shareek-e-safar na jaan

jo chaanv mehrban ho
use apna ghar na jaan

whoever you find along the way
mistake them not as friends of life

that free shade you find
mistake it not as your home

Parveen Shakir
1952 - 1994, Karachi, Pakistan

shareek companion
safar journey
chaanv shadow
mehrban benevolent, complimentary
khulta kisi pe kyon
mere dil ka mamla
she’ron ke intikhaab
ne ruswa kiya mujhe

why should my heart’s matters
be open for all to see

my selection of poetry
has brought me enough infamy

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

khulta  open
mamla  affairs, matters
intikhab  selection
ruswa  bad reputation, infamy
bahaaron ki nazar mein
phool aur kaante barabar

mohabbat kya karenge
dost dushman dekhne waale

in the eyes of nature
flowers and thorns are the same

how can one ever love, thinking
in terms of friends and foes

Kaleem Aajiz
1924 - 2015, Patna, Bihar

bahaaron  spring, nature
barabar  equal, equivalent
mohabbat  love
dushman  enemy
na dunga dil use main
ye hamesha kahta tha
vo aaj le hi gayaa, aur
'zafar' se kuchh na hua

i will not give her my heart,
i kept telling myself
she walked away with it today,
and Zafar was helpless

Bahadur Shah Zafar (Last Mughal Emperor)
1775 - 1862, Delhi

doonga         give
hamesha        always
be-kaif jawani
be-dard zamana
nakaam-e-mohabbat ka
itna hi fasana

joyless youth,
painless life

for those unsuccessful in love,
this is the only story

Sarwar Alam Raz
1935, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh

be-kaif without joy
be-dard without pain
nakaam failure
fasana story
Alfaaz ki Mehfil

tera imam be-huzoor
teri namaz be-suroor
aisi namaz se guzar
aise imam se guzar

your priest is absent
and your prayer joyless
find your way out of
that priest and that prayer

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

huzoor present, graceful
suroor joy
namaz prayer
imam priest
koi kya jaane ki hai
roz-e-qayamat kya cheez
doosra naam hai
meri shab-e-tanhai ka

what does anyone know
about the day of apocalypse
it is another name for
my night of loneliness

Jaleel Manikpuri
1866 - 1946, Manikpur, Uttar Pradesh

qayamat  
crisis, danger
roz  
day
shab  
evening, night
tanhayi  
loneliness
mohabbat rang de jaati hai
jab dil dil se milta hai
magar mushkil to ye hai
dil badi mushkil se milta hai

love makes life colorful
when two hearts meet
but what is difficult
is for two hearts to meet

Jaleel Manikpuri
1866 - 1946, Manikpur, Uttar Pradesh

mohabbat  love
rang       color
mushkil    difficult
dil        heart
khwabon ki tarah aanaa
khushbu ki tarah jaana
mumkin hi nahi lagta
ai dost tujhe paanaa

arriving like a dream, and
leaving with fragrance behind
it seems difficult, o friend,
to find someone like you

Athar Shakeel
1968, Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh

khwaab  dream
khushbu  fragrance
mumkin  possible
paana  to get
mere talvon ke lahu se
hogi raushan har jihat
rah-ravaan-e-raah-e-manzil
honge shashdar dekhna

the blood of the soles of my feet,
spreads light in all directions
that followers to the destination,
watch them be amazed

Mahfuzur Rahman Adil
1949 - 2019, Dhaka, Bangladesh

talvon  soles
lahu    blood
jihat   direction
raah   path
shashdar  follower
main lautne ke irade se
jaa raha huun magar
safar safar hai
mera intezaar mat karna

i am leaving with the
intent to return, but
journey is a journey,
don’t wait up for me

Sahal Sahri Nainitali
1994 - 2012, Karachi, Pakistan

safar  journey
irada  desire, wish
intezaar  waiting
dard ko dil mein

de jagah, shaayar

ilm se shayari

nahi hoti

find a place for pain
in your heart, o poet

no poetry comes
from just knowledge

Anonymous

dard pain
jagah place
shaayar poet
ilm knowledge
shayari poetry
aur bhi dukh hain zamaane mein
mohabbat ke siva

rahatein aur bhi hain
vasl ki raahat ke siva

during this life too
there are other sorrows
than love’s longing

there are other comforts too
than the union with the beloved

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
1911 - 1984, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
1962 - Lenin Peace Prize
1984 - Nobel Prize nomination

raahat  comfort
vasl      union
itna kyun sikhaye
jaa rahi hai zindagi?

humne kaunsi sadiyan
guzarni hai yahan

why is life teaching me
so many lessons?

how many ages am I
going to spend here?

Anonymous
doosron par agar
tabsira kijiye
saamne aaina
rakh liya kijiye

as you get ready
to criticize others
keep a mirror
handy

Khumar Barabankavi
1919 - 1999, Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh

tabsira
criticism
aaina
mirror
koshish bhi kar
ummeed bhi rakh, raasta bhi chun

phir is ke baad
thoda muqaddar talaash kar

work hard too, keep faith too
find a path too

after all this...
look for a little luck

Nida Fazli
1938 - 2016, Delhi
2013 - Padma Shri

koshish  effort
ummeed  hope
muqaddar  fate, luck
talaash  search
na kar 'sauda' tu shikva
hum se dil ki be-qaraari ka
mohabbat kis ko deti hai, miyaan,
aaram sukoon duniya mein?

don't complain, sauda,
about your heart's restlessness
for whom has love given
peace and quiet in this world?

Sauda Mohammad Rafi
1713 - 1781, Shahjahanabad (Lucknow)

shikva complaint
be-qaraar restless
aaraam rest
sukoon peace
mujh ko thakne nahi deta
ye zaroorat ka pahaad
mere bachche mujhe
budha nahi hone dete

the mountain of needs
won’t let me get tired
my children
won’t let me grow old

Meraj Faizabadi
1941 - 2013, Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh
paani mein aks
aur kisi aasmaan ka hai
ye naav kaun si hai
ye dariya kahan ka hai

the mountain of needs
won’t let me get tired
my children
won’t let me grow old

Ahmad Mushtaq
1933, Lahore, Pakistan

aks  reflection
aasmaan  sky
naav  boat
dariya  river
khudi ko kar buland itna
ke har taqdeer se pehle
khuda bande se khud pooche
bata teri raza kya hai

strengthen yourself so much
that before every turn of fate
god asks of his child
tell me, what is your wish?

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

khudi yourself
buland strong, strength
taqdeer fate
bande men, human
raza wish
dhoop mein niklo
ghataon mein naha kar dekho
zindagi kya hai
kitabon ko hata kar dekho

cut out into the sun
take a bathe in the bearing clouds (rain)
figure out life
by first closing the book

Nida Fazli
1938 - 2016, Delhi
2013 - Padma Shri

dhoop  sunlight, heat
ghataon  bearing clouds (rain)
naha  bathe
kitabon  books
insaan ki khwahishon ki
koi inteha nahi

do gaz zameen bhi chahiye
do gaz kafan ke baad

there is no limit
to the human need

after two yards of shroud
needs two yards of land

Kaifi Azmi
1919 - 2002, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh
1975 - Sahitya Akademi Award

khwahishon aspirations, wishes
inteha limit, utmost point
zameen ground, land
kafan shroud, grave-clothe
aarzoo hai ki
tu yahan aaye
aur phir umr bhar
na jaaye kahin

my wish is
for you to come
and then
you don’t leave ever

Nasir Kazmi
1925 - 1972, Ambala, Haryana

aarzoo          wish, desire
umr             span of life
ye iltija dua
ye tamanna fuzool hai
sukhi nadi ke paas
samundar na jaayega

this request, supplication
this desire is futile
the sea will not
go to the dry river

Hayat Lakhnavi
1931 - 2006, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

iltija appeal, request
dua supplication
tamanna wish, desire
fuzool futile, useless
sukhi nadi dry river
samundar sea
masjid mein bulaate hain  
hamen zaahid-e-na-fahm  
hotay kuch agar hosh to  
mai-khane na jaate

the foolish devotee  
asks me into the mosque  
if i have any sense, won’t i  
find my way to the tavern

Ameer Minai  
1829 - 1900, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

masjid  
zahid  
na-fahm  
hosh  
mai-khane  
mosque  
devout  
foolish, ignorant  
sense  
tavern, bar


din to phir din hai
guzar jaatia hai
raat kathit hai
badi mushkil se

day is but a day,
it passes fast
it is the night that
is difficult to bear

Nasir Kas Ganjui
1928 - 2002, Etah, Uttar Pradesh

guzar to pass
mushkil difficult
aisa hans hans ke
na dekha karo sab ki janib
log aisi hi adaon pe
fida hote hain

don’t flash your smiles
at all these men, miss
they fall so easily
for your mannerisms

Majrooh Sultanpuri
1919 - 2000, Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh
1993 - Dada Saheb Phalke Award
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

fida
janib
adaon

drawn towards
in the direction of
manner, style
sab ik charaagh ke
parvaane hona chaahte hain

ajeeb log hain
deewaane hona chaahte hain

all wish to be
moths to a flame
strange people...
all seeking to be mad

Asad Badayuni
1952 - 2003, Badayun, Uttar Pradesh

charaagh  flame
parvaane  moths
ajeeb    strange
deewane  mad
dost naaraaz
ho gaye kitne
ik zara aaina
dikhaane mein

how angry
friends became
when just shown
the mirror

Baqi Ahmad Puri
1950, Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan

naaraaz  angry, offended
aaina    mirror
dikhaane shown
bahakna meri fitrat
mein nahi par
sambhalne mein
pareshani bahut hai

drunkenness is not
in my nature, but
practicing moderation
is quite difficult

Muzaffar Abdali
1971, Delhi

bahakna  to be drunk
fitrat    nature
sambhalna balanced, moderation
pareshani difficulty
jo mil gaya usi ko  
muqaddar samajh liya  

jo kho gaya main  
usko bhulata chala gaya  

that which i got in life  
i thought of it as my good fate  

those that i lost  
i moved on, forgetting them  

Sahir Ludhianvi  
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab  
1971 - Padma Shri  
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India  

muqaddar  
fate, destined  
bhulaana  
forget
kuch sitare meri palkon
pe chamakte hain abhi

kuchh sitare mere seene
mein samaye hue hai

some stars are
twinkling in my eyes

some others are
gathered in my heart

Arshad Abdul Hamid
1919 - 2000, Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh

sitare    stars
palkon    eyelids
chamakte  shine, twinkle
seene     heart
aapki tasveer thi
akhbaar mein
kya sabab hai
aap ghar jaate nahi

saw your photo
in the newspaper
what is the reason
you don’t seem to go home

Farooq Nazki
1940, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir
musafir hain yaaron
na ghar hai na thikaana
mujhe chalte jaana hai
bas chalte jaana

i am a traveler, my friends
with neither home, nor shelter
i just need to keep walking
keep walking

Gulzar
1934, Dina, Pakistan
2002 - Sahitya Akademi Award
2004 - Padma Bhushan

musafir  traveler
thikaana  shelter
masaael ek hai sabke,
to mazhab mukhtalif kyony hai?

jo khaaliq ek hai subka,
to khalkat mukhtalif kyony hai?

koi pandit, koi gyani,
koi father, koi mullah;

jo manzil ek hai sub ki,
to rehbar mukhtalif kyony hai?

if the problems are the same for all
why are religions so different?

if the creator of us all is the same
why are the forms so different?

some pandit, some guru,
some father, some mullah,

if our destination is the same
why are the guides so different?

Inder Singh
Delhi
tamaam umr mera mujh se
ikhtilaaf raha

gila na kar jo kabhi
tera humnava na hua

my entire life, i struggled
and fought with myself

so, don’t complain that
i couldn’t be there for you

Lutf-Ur-Rahman
1941, Patna, Bihar

tamaam: entire
umr: life
ikhtilaaf: in opposition
gila: complain
kabhi: on occasion
humnava: fellow songster, friend
sarfaroshi ki tamanna
ab hamare dil mein hai
dekhna hai zor kitna
baazu-e-qaatil mein hai

the desire to sacrifice
is raging in my heart
we shall see how much power
there is the assassin's arms

Bismil Azimabadi
1901 - 1978, Azimabad, Bihar

Song that was a rallying cry of Indian independence.

sarfaroshi  sacrifice
tamanna  desire
zor       power, strength
baazu     arms
qaatil    assassin, executioner
jis bhi fankaar
ka shahkaar ho tum
us ne sadiyon
tumhen socha hoga

whichever artist created
the masterpiece that’s you
(s)he must have
thought of it for ages

Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi
1916 - 2006, Sargodha, Pakistan

fankaar         artist, craftsman
shahkar         masterpiece
sadiyon         ages
socha           think
aqaa’ed vahm hai mazhab
khayaal-e-khaam hai saaqi
azal se zehn-e-insaan
basta-e-auhaam hai saaqi

religion but a fanciful belief
a string of delusions

forever the human mind has been
hostage to a bundle of superstitions

Sahir Ludhianvi
1921 - 1980, Ludhiana, Punjab
1971 - Padma Shri
2013 - Commemorative Stamp by India

aqaaed belief
mazhab religion
khayaal-e-khaam silly ideas
azal from beginning to eternity
zehn-e-insaan human mind
basta bundle
auhaam superstition
chalta hoon thodi door
har ik tez rau ke saath
pehchaanta nahin hoon abhee
raahbar ko main

let's go a little far
with every strong wave
i am yet to find someone
a guide to show the way

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

tez rau fast-moving
pehchaanta spot, identify
raahbar guide
muskuraye baghair bhi
woh hont

nazar aate hain
muskuraye huye

even without a smile
those lips
seem to be smiling
all the while

Anwar Shuoor
1943, Seoni, Madhya Pradesh
duniya mein wohi shakhs hai
taazim ke qaabil
jis shakhs ne halat ka
rukh mod diya ho

that person is worthy
of reverence in this world

who changes the
course of fate

Ali Sardar Jafri
1913 - 2000, Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh
1997 - Jnanpith Award
1967 - Padma Shri

shaks  person
taazim  respect, reverence, praise
qaabil  worthy, deserving
haalat  circumstance, fate
rukh   direction
zara ek tabassum ki
takleef karna
ki gulzar mein
phool murjha rahe hai

do take the trouble
to smile once
for the flowers
in the garden are wilting

Abdul Hamid ‘Adam’
1909 - 1981, Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan

tabassum smile
gulzar garden
phool flower
murjha wane, wilt
jin aankhon se
mujhe tum dekhte ho
mein un aankhon se
duniya dekhta hoon

those eyes through
which you see me
through those eyes
i see the world

Rasa Chughtai
1928 - 2018, Jaipur, Rajasthan

aankhon
eyes
dekhna
see
duniya
world
inquilaab aayega raftaar se
mayoos na ho
bahut aahista nahin hai
jo bahut tez nahin

the revolution will come soon
don’t be despondent
it doesn’t come too slowly
not does it come too fast

Ali Sardar Jafri
1913 - 2000, Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh
1997 - Jnanpith Award
1967 - Padma Shri

inquilaab  revolution
raftaar  soon, fast
aahista  slow
tez  fast, speed
awaaaz de ke dekh lo
shaayad woh mil hi jaye
varna ye umr bhar ka safar
raaigaan to hai

call and reach out...maybe
you will get to meet her
else, the life’s journey
would be in vain

Muneer Niyazi
1928 - 2006, Hoshiarpur, Punjab

awaaaz voice
shaayad perhaps, maybe
varna or else
umr life
safar journey
raaigaan wasted, in vain
zaroor teri gali se
guzar hua hoga

ki aaj baad-e-saba
beqarar aayi hai

surely, it must have
passed through your street

for today, the morning zephyr
arrived here a bit restless

Kausar Niyazi
1964, Mianwali, Pakistan

zaroor for sure
gali street
guzar pass through
baad-e-saba morning breeze (zephyr)
beqarar restless
jaanta hoon ek aise
shakhs ko mein bhi 'muneer'
gham se pathar ho gaya
lekin kabhi roya nahin

i too know of
one such person, ‘muneer’
whom sorrow has turned into a stone
but he never shed a tear

Muneer Niyazi
1928 - 2006, Hoshiarpur, Punjab

shaks            person
gham             sorrow
pathar           stone
roya             weep
how wretched is your fate, ‘zafar’
that for your burial
you couldn’t get two yards
in the lane (land) of the beloved

Bahadur Shah Zafar (Last Mughal Emperor)
1775 - 1862, Delhi

badnaseeb   unfortunate
dafn         burial
zameen       ground
koo-e-yaar   lane of the beloved
**Ahmed Faraz**

1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

*tod diya tasbeeh ko*
*is khayaal se ‘faraz’*

*kya gin gin ke nam lena uska*
*jo behisaab deta hai*

i broke the prayer rosary
with this thought, ‘faraz’

why count and pray to one
who gives without keeping an account

*tod*  to break
*tasbeeh*  rosary
*khayaal*  thought
*gin*  count
*behisaab*  without an account
jurm

ungrateful, impious

beauty

mischief, playful
hoshwalon ko khabar kya
bekhudi kya cheez hai

ishq kijaye phir samajhiye
zindagi kya cheez hai

how can sane people know
what ecstasy is all about

love and figure out
what life is all about

Nida Fazli
1938 - 2016, Delhi
2013 - Padma Shri

hoshwalon  those who are sane
bekhudi    delirium, senselessness
cheez      matter
ishq       love
samajhiye  understand
zindagi    life
fareb-e-nazar hai
sukoon-o-sabaat
tadapta hai
har zarra-e-kayanaat

due to agitation and deception, these things are a deception and illusion; every atom of the universe is endlessly pulsating (for change).

Mohammed Iqbal
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

fareb = deception
nazar = vision
sukoon = comfort, peace
sabaat = permanence
tadapta = pulsate
zarra = atom, particle
kayanaat = universe
aaina dekh kar
woh ye samjhe
mil gaya
husn-e-bemisaal hamein

looking into the mirror
she said to herself
i have found
an unexampled beauty

Bekhud Dehlvi
1863 - 1955, Bharatput, Rajasthan

aaina  mirror
samjhe  understood
husn    beauty
bemisaal incomparable, unexampled
In the path of love and desire

Who wishes for the end?

If the path makes sense
Journey is journey's reward

Ghulam Rabbani Taban
1914 - 1993, Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh
1979 - Sahitya Akademi Award

Raah-e-talab
Kise aarzoo-e-manzil hai
Shuoor ho to safar
Khud safar ka haasil hai

In the path of love and desire
Who wishes for the end?
If the path makes sense
Journey is journey's reward

Raah-e-talab path of desire
Arzoo-e-manzil desire for destination (end)
Shuoor sense
Safar journey
Haasil outcome, gain, product
kahan aa ke rukne the raaste
kahan mod tha use bhool ja
woh jo mil gaya use yaad rakh
jo nahin mila use bhool ja

where the paths were meant to end
and where they turned...forget it
remember and cherish what you got
and what you didn't...forget it

Amjad Islam Amjad
1944, Sialkot, Pakistan

rukne  stop
raaste  path
mod    turn
bhool  forget
mil gaya  got
yaad  remember
where's the tavern’s entrance, ghalib, and where is the preacher

i know only this...yesterday, when i was coming out, he was going in

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

maikhana tavern, bar
darwaza door
waiz preacher, holy man
jaante know
koi manzil ke qareeb aa ke
bhatak jaata hai

koi manzil pe pahonchta hai
bhatak jaane se

as they near the destination
some get lost

some find the destination
by going astray first

Qasri Kanpuri
1914 - 1996, Kanpur

manzil  destination
qareeb  near
bhatak jaana  to get lost
pahoonchta  to reach
i too feel frightened
by the lonely quietness of the path

but my heart is set on this journey
i have no choice but to go

Javed Akhtar
1945, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh
2007, Padma Bhushan

dar fear
raaste path
sannaate silence, quietness
safar journey
kisi ko ghar se nikalte hi
mil gayi manzil

koi hamari tarah
umr bhar safar mein raha

some reach their destination
as they set out of their home

but some like me
keep traveling all their lives

Ahmed Faraz
1931 - 2008, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
2005 - Sitara-i-Imtiaz

nikalte come out of
manzil destination
umr life
safar journey
kaam hai mera taghayyur
naam hai mera shabaab
mera naara,
inquilaab-o-inquilaab-o-inquilaab

change is my mission
youth is my name

my slogan,
revolution, revolution, revolution

Josh Malihabadi
1898 - 1982, Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh

taghayyur change
shabaab youth
naara slogan
inquilaab revolution
roz kahta hun ke
ab unko na dekhoonga kabhi
roz us kooche mein ik
kaam nikal aata hai

i say every day that
i am never going to see her again

but every day i find i have
some work to do in her street

Seemab Akbarabadi
1880 - 1951, Agra, Uttar Pradesh

roz          every day
dekhoonga    will see
kooche       street
kaam         work
'saif' andaaz-e-bayaan
rang badal deta hai

varna duniya mein

koi baat nai baat nahin

the style of narration
changes everything, ‘saif’

if not, in this world
there is nothing new to say

Saifuddin Saif
1922 - 1993, Amritsar, Punjab

andaaz  style
bayaan  narration
varna  or else
baat  words
jo raah-e-ishq mein
qadam rakkhe
woh nasheb-o-faraz
kya jaane

those who choose to
tavel on the path of love

what would they know
of ups and downs

Daagh Dehlvi
1831 - 1905, Delhi

raah-e-ishq path of love
qadam step
nasheb-o-faraz up and down, rise and fall
kya jaane what will they know
yaa-rab, woh na samjhe hai
na samjhenge meri baat
de aur dil un ko
jo na de mujh ko zabaan aur

oh god, she doesn’t understand me
nor will she ever

either give her another heart
or give me more eloquence

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

yaa-rab          oh god
samjhe           understand
dil               heart
zabaan           tongue, dialect, speech
Kabhi yun tha ki hazaar teer
Jigar mein the to dukhi na the
Magar ab ye hai kisi maharabaan ke
Tapaak ne bhi rula diya

There was a time when even a thousand arrows in the heart did not cause me grief
But now even the warm handshake of a friend makes me weep

Daagh Dehlvi
1831 - 1905, Delhi

Hazaar  thousand
teer  arrows
Jigar  up and down, rise and fall
Maharabaan  well-wisher, friend
Tapaak  warmth, affection
raasta hai ki
katta jaata hai
faasla hai ki
kam nahin hota

as i keep traveling
on this road
the distance to my destination
doesn’t seem to reduce

Qabil Ajmeri
1931 - 1962, Ajmer, Rajasthan

raasta  path, road
katta jaata  to get spent
faasla    distance
**Alfaaz ki Mehfil**

**Mohammed Iqbal**
1877 - 1938, Sialkot, Pakistan

*anokhi* waza hai
saare zamaane se niraale hai
ye aashiq kaun si basti ke
yaa-rab, rahne vaale hai

such strange mannerisms they have
so unique in this whole world
	hese lovers, oh god,
which city do they come from

**anokhi** | quaint, odd  
**waza**    | style, mannerism  
**zamaana** | world  
**niraale** | unique, strange  
**aashiq**  | lover  
**basti**   | city  
**yaa-rab** | oh god
Alfaaz ki Mehfil

*dil mein na ho jurat*
*to mohabbat nahi milti*

*khairaat mein itni badi*
*daulat nahi milti*

dil mein na ho jurat
to mohabbat nahi milti
khairaat mein itni badi
daulat nahi milti

when there is no boldness in the heart
love cannot be obtained
in alms, such a treasure
cannot be obtained

**Nida Fazli**
1938 - 2016, Delhi
2013 - Padma Shri

jurat  |  boldness
mohabbat  |  love
khairaat  |  charity, alms
daulat  |  riches, treasure
is shahar mein
jeene ke andaaz niraale hain
honton pe latife hain
awaaz mein chhaale hain

in this city,
the style of living is so strange
wit and smile on the lips
but sharp edges in the voice

Javed Akhtar
1945, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh
2007, Padma Bhushan

shahar  city
jeene ka andaaz  style of living
niraale  quaint, strange
honton  lips
chhaale  blisters, edges
sada ek hi rukh
nahi naav chalti
chalo tum udhar ko
hava ho jidhar ki

the boat doesn’t travel
in one direction always
let’s sail wherever
the wind takes us

Altaf Hussain Hali
1837 - 1914, Panipat, Haryana

rukh direction
naav boat
chalti go
udhar there
hava breeze, wind
yuun ‘abroo’ banaave

dil mein hazaar baatein

jab ruu-ba-ruu ho

tere guftaar bhool jaave

what, abroo, you think of
a thousand things to say in your heart

but when face-to-face
you don’t remember anything to say

Shah Mubarak Abroo
1683 - 1733, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh

banaave  make, make up
hazaar  thousands
baatein  words, things to say
ruu-ba-ruu  face-to-face
guftaar  speech
bhool  forget
ghalib chhuti sharaab
par ab bhi kabhi kabhi
peeta hoon
roz-e-abr-o-shab-e-mehtab mein

ghalib has given up drinking
but, still, once in a while
i enjoy a drink
on cloudy days and moon-filled nights

Mirza Ghalib
1797 - 1869, Agra, Uttar Pradesh
December 27, 2017 - Google Doodle

chhuti  given up
sharaab  wine, drink
kabhi kabhi  once in a while
roz-e-abr  day of clouds
shab  evening, night
mahtaab  moon
KHAT-E-ARZOO

tum aao gulshan-e-lahore se chaman bardosh
hum aaye subh-e-banaras ki roshni le kar

himalaya ki hawaon ki taazgi le kar
aur us ke baad yeh poochenge kaun dushman hai?

you come bearing the beautiful fragrant garden of lahore
we will bring the bright morning lights of benares

with us taking in the fresh breeze of the himalayas
and then we ask: who is the enemy?

Ali Sardar Jafri

The shers in Alfaaz ki Mehfil stand as testimony to the priceless
treasure of Urdu and Urdu poetry, shared by India and Pakistan.
Here’s hoping that the two countries find their lost bonds and
make them richer, stronger. May they, together, realize a world
of greatness in culture and commerce, arts and letters.

And, may, in that glorious world, a thousand flowers of Urdu
shaayars bloom, helping us understand and appreciate life in all
its pain, beauty, and joy.

Ahmed Faraz

tu sirf dashna-e-nafrat hi laharaata raha
tu ne kabhi dushman se lipat kar nahi dekha

you have only been waving this dagger of hate
you haven't tried ever embracing your enemy

Ahmed Faraz
BAZM-E-SUKHAN

The Bazm-e-Sukhan (An assembly celebrating Poetry) is a weekly gathering of a diverse group united by its love for Urdu poetry and prose. The Bazm started in December 2018 and was held every Wednesday at Hyderabad’s iconic cultural sake, Lamakaan, through the year and till March 2020.

When COVID-19 closed down public spaces, the Bazm moved online. Since then, the weekly session has been held every Tuesday at 10:00 pm IST.

A group that now consists of about 150 people spread worldwide tunes every week to listen to and share their favourite Urdu poetry pieces. The prime audience is a bunch of folks who enjoy literature, are entertained by subtle turns of phrase and like to discuss art. They find accomplished Professors of Urdu who help them understand difficult words and translate unfamiliar idioms. Young software professionals recite lines from their favourite poets and get appreciated by some senior aficionados who bring in their memoirs and share their memories of age-old mushairas and poetry sessions.

We now are back with our in-person events, hosting the Bazm every second Wednesday each month at Lamakaan.

The Bazm also publishes anthologies, the first being an iconic account of a life lived in poetry in the Policy force by a retired Director General of Police, R. P. Joshi. This book is available online at www.cdpp.co.in and can also be ordered at Amazon.

https://www.amazon.in/dp/8195344925/ref=cm_sw_r_wa_api_i_35Y97NH02XNTA85T58D1.
CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE (CDPP)

The Centre for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP) is a research institute that works on development concerns and contemporary public policy challenges. Working with a team of research professionals and expert consultants, under the guidance of eminent public intellectuals, CDPP conducts research studies, develops policy papers, publishes a peer reviewed quarterly Journal and hosts Conferences, Seminars and Workshops.

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION (DEF)

DEF is a Delhi-based nonprofit organization working towards empowering people to gain access to better healthcare, education, skills and livelihood opportunities through digital literacy and digital tools. The organization’s main focus is to make technology easily accessible to the masses, to empower women, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly through providing functional digital literacy, media literacy, and digital up-skilling across agriculture, micro and nano-business, health, education, livelihood, and entrepreneurial skills. Over the last 20 years, the organization has been actively engaged in digitally empowering local communities through its 1,500 Community Information Resource Centers. These centers are supported by a widespread network of 10,000 digital foot soldiers located across 24 states and 135 districts in rural, tribal, marginalized and unreached areas. DEF has directly impacted the lives of more than 30 million people including people from below the poverty line, women, artisans, youth, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.
A-CODE

A-CODE is an effort of finding ways to enhance collaboration among civil society organizations working in different sectors, and advocating a more pivotal role for the arts in social change. The collective would have several priority issues that cut across the work of civil society organizations and that define and indicate social change.

LAMAKAAN

Lamakaan is an inclusive cultural space and Trust that promotes and presents the best of arts, literature, theatre, debate and dialogue with a commitment to being open and accessible. As an independent organisation, Lamakaan encourages those hosting events to also work towards independence from corporate and government funds as a sustainable way of achieving independence from their agenda. As result, we do not host programmes that are sponsored by any businesses and governments, also we do not accept any donations cash or kind from government or corporate organization's.
Learn Urdu while enjoying its priceless poetry.

*Alfaaz ki Mehfil* is a collection of select Urdu *shers* (couplets), translated into simple English. Each page has a helpful mini-dictionary for quick referencing.

Lovingly curated and interpreted by one amateur aashiq for fellow amateur aashiqs.

Perhaps for the first time ever, we will have a book on Urdu poetry that has been curated by someone who is neither a scholar nor a long-term student of Urdu. *Alfaaz ki Mehfil* is written by Satya Prabhakar who has been learning Urdu for the last eighteen months, devoting about 15 minutes a day on selecting and then translating Urdu couplets into English.

The charm of *Alfaaz ki Mehfil* is exactly this: its lack of pretension and how *mohabbat* for Urdu flows out of every page, be it in the evocative, yet simple, interpretation or in giving a brief introduction to each poet.

Turn to any page. Savor the wit and wisdom of the greatest Urdu poets from the 1600s to now. And then spread the joy: share the *sher*.

WhatsApp Yes to +91 63812 93765 to subscribe.