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# Thematic Uniqueness of Uzbek Ghazals of The Second Half of The 20th Century

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**Abstract:** The ghazal, a classical poetic form, holds a vital position in the literary traditions of many cultures, especially in expressing themes of love, mysticism, and social values. In Uzbekistan, ghazals evolved during the second half of the 20th century, reflecting not only romantic sentiments but also ideological and patriotic narratives shaped by the socio-political context of the Soviet era. Despite the existing scholarship on traditional ghazals, limited attention has been paid to the thematic transitions and symbolic richness of Uzbek ghazals during this specific historical period. This article aims to analyze the thematic uniqueness of Uzbek ghazals in the second half of the 20th century by exploring their structure, poetic devices, and symbolic representations. The study finds that while romantic themes persisted, ghazals increasingly incorporated ethical-educational, socio-political, and patriotic content. Poets infused their work with metaphors of labor, ideological duty, and subtle mystical allegory. A distinctive feature identified is the coexistence of romantic and ideological motifs within the same literary form, where even political verses subtly retain lyrical depth and artistic integrity. The analysis of seldom-discussed rindona and Sufi symbolism in Soviet-era ghazals also adds a new interpretive layer. This work underscores the adaptability of the ghazal form in maintaining cultural and artistic relevance under shifting ideological regimes, offering a framework for future research on literary resilience and poetic transformation under political influence.

**Keywords:** ghazal, socio-political ghazals, ethical-educational ghazals, romantic ghazals, mystical ghazals, satirical ghazals, war-themed ghazals, patriotic ghazals

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## 1. Introduction

From the earliest days, the thematic classification of ghazals has been a subject of scholarly debate. Scholars such as Qabul Muhammad, Hanna al-Fakhuri, Y. E. Bertels, Krachkovskiy, and M. Khamroyev argue that love and passion are the central themes of the ghazal, asserting its origins lie in the expression of romantic affection. At the same time, other literary figures like A. Hayitmetov, O. Nosirov, R. Orzibekov and M. Shaykhzoda also emphasize the dominance of the love theme without dismissing the relevance of other subjects. R. Orzibekov provides a more comprehensive definition, suggesting that ghazals, while traditionally romantic in a narrow sense, can also address social, ethical, and philosophical themes in a broader context[1].

Throughout history, ghazals have served as a profound literary genre expressing emotions, philosophy, and societal norms. Traditionally centered on love and passion, ghazals have also embraced broader themes over time. In the second half of the 20th century, especially in Uzbekistan, this poetic form evolved in response to socio-political transformations[2]. While earlier scholars emphasized the romantic nature of ghazals, contemporary studies reveal an expansion into themes such as ethics, education, patriotism, and political ideology. Influential poets of the Soviet era subtly infused state-

aligned messages alongside traditional lyrical motifs, reflecting both personal sentiment and societal expectation. This period marks a significant shift in thematic diversity within Uzbek ghazals, capturing the complexities of love, ideology, and cultural identity[3].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methodology used in this study is based on literary analysis and thematic categorization of Uzbek ghazals composed during the second half of the 20th century. The research is qualitative in nature, relying primarily on textual interpretation and comparative analysis of poetic content across various poets and periods. A selection of ghazals by notable poets such as Chustiy, Charxiy, Erkin Vohidov, Abdulla Oripov, Habibiy, and Sirojiddin Sayyid was examined in detail to identify the thematic trends and transformations within the genre[4]. The analysis involved close reading and classification of verses based on dominant themes such as romantic love, socio-political commentary, ethical-didactic instruction, patriotic fervor, and Sufi mysticism. Frequency counts of specific lexical items like "labor," "cotton," and "party" were used to highlight the socio-political orientation of ghazals during the Soviet era. Additionally, the study employed a comparative method to contrast the prevalence of traditional romantic motifs with newer ideological and patriotic expressions. Through the lens of poetic devices, metaphors, and symbols, especially those typical of Sufi literature (e.g., wine, cupbearer, divine love), the research explored the evolution of meaning and the multilayered nature of poetic imagery. Primary sources included printed divans and anthologies, while secondary sources encompassed scholarly publications and reference works in Uzbek and Russian literary studies[5]. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how ghazals served both as artistic expressions and ideological tools during a politically charged era in Uzbek literary history.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The ghazal tradition in the second half of the 20th century is characterized by a sharp increase in the number of socially-political, ethical-didactic, and laudatory ghazals. During the second half of the 20th century, due to the influence of the Cold War, literary works became significantly politicized[6]. This trend is also observable in the ghazal genre. Whereas classical ghazals primarily focused on the themes of love and passion, the ghazals of this period were increasingly infused with socio-political and ethical-didactic messages. Numerous ghazals were composed that carried Soviet ideological content, glorified an idealized life, praised efforts such as canal construction, land reclamation, and cotton farming. The primary goal of such literature was twofold: on one hand, to instill a work ethic in the population and promote the idea of finding happiness through labor; on the other, to employ literature as a weapon in the broader ideological and geopolitical conflict of the Cold War. As a result, the poetic lexicon of many poets began to include words such as "labor," "party," "canal," and "cotton." For instance, in Chustiy's *Flowers of Devotion*, the word labor appears 72 times, cotton and related terms appear 29 times, and canal is mentioned 5 times[7]. In Charxiy's ghazals, "labor" appears 36 times, while cotton and its derivatives appear 14 times. "Notably, poets often used the words "labor" and "creativity" side by side, illustrating the political motives underlying the poetic expression of the time". Poetry composed with such a political agenda became a state requirement, and those who did not comply faced various forms of repression. Virtually all literary figures who lived and wrote during the Soviet era produced such ideologically driven works[8]. This is evident in verses such as Charxiy's:

Bizda mehnat baxt ham inson aziz,

Chunki inson qalbida vijdon aziz.

(For us, labor is happiness, and man is sacred, Because in the human heart, conscience is dear).

Or Chustiy's lines:

Xirmonga ma'ni qo'shgan dono terimchilarsiz,

Har yil sinovdan o'tgan a'lo terimchilarsiz.

(Wise cotton pickers have added meaning to the harvest, Each year, exemplary pickers pass their tests with honor)[9].

As Baxtiyorxon, son of the poet Chustiy, noted in an interview: “Phrases that met the demands of the era and the government helped preserve the true artistic works of the author.”

The increase of such figurative expressions in ghazals did not undermine the celebration of traditional themes and romantic relationships. For example, Chustiy’s couplet:

Tiriklik manbayi jismim aro jon bo’ldi yo senmu?

Xayoling jon uyin to’rida jonon bo’ldi yo senmu?

(Was it the soul within my body that became the source of life, or was it you?

Was it your image that became the beloved in the net of my soul?)

— a love poem built entirely upon the rhetorical device of feigned ignorance (tajāhul al-‘ārif) — confirms this point. Or Habibiy’s lines:

Bu nasimi subhidam yor uyquda seskandimu,

Tutdi mushk olamni yo kokillari tebrandimu?

(Was it the morning breeze that startled my sleeping beloved? Was it the fragrance of her tresses that filled the world with musk?)

Such examples reaffirm that romantic themes remained vital. In particular, love ghazals by poets such as Erkin Vohidov, Abdulla Oripov, and Sirojiddin Sayyid — composed closer to the independence era — are of great significance[10]. Among Vohidov’s 81 ghazals, 43 are devoted to romantic themes; of Oripov’s 31 ghazals, 17 are of a romantic nature; and 8 out of 12 ghazals by Sayyid deal with love, demonstrating the ongoing importance of the genre. Since its emergence, the love ghazal has remained the most widespread type across all regions. This is not surprising, given that the lexical meaning of the word ghazal is itself “to converse amorously” or “to praise the beloved”. In its earliest forms, the ghazal depicted real lovers, the regions they inhabited, and their actual emotions — thus, love was metaphorical[11]. The lyrical persona’s passion remained confined to the material world. Later, under the influence of Islam and the development of Sufism, the subject matter of the ghazal expanded to transcend this world. Love in ghazals took on a divine dimension, and over time, a gradual transition from human love to divine love gave rise to Sufi ghazals. Early representatives of Sufi literature include Dhu’n-Nun al-Misri, Junayd of Baghdad, his disciple Ali ibn Ruzbari, and Mansur al-Hallaj.

Over time, love once again returned to the realm of human relationships[12]. In ghazals of the second half of the 20th century, the earthly love between real lovers was once more openly expressed:

Tong chog’i sarvinozim asta qiyolab o’tdi,

Tushgach ko’zi ko’zimga ta’zim bajo aylab o’tdi.

(At dawn, my graceful beloved passed by slowly,

Later, she honored me with her gaze, lowering her eyes into mine).

Or:

Chamanda qo’lga soz olsang Navoiydan o’qib-kuylab,

Qolur hayratda bulbullar shirin kuychi g’azalxonsan[13].

(If you take the instrument in hand and sing verses of Navoi, The nightingales will fall silent in awe of your sweet voice and poetry).

Although the depiction of real lovers became prominent in poetry, the praise of divine love did not disappear entirely. Divine love concealed itself behind human affection. This is evident in verses such as:

Hijron yo’li haddan uzoq erdi, dedi Mashrab,

Umrin qadami birla ani bir qadam etdim[14].

(Mashrab said, “The path of separation was unbearably long.” “With the first step of my life, I took one step upon it”).

And also:

Eng ulug' baxtim nazargohida bo'lmoq jilvagar – Kuymasin bag'rim, judolikdan ko'zim nam bo'lmasin. (My greatest joy is to be in Your gaze, to be where You glance – Let not my soul burn in longing, let no tear fall from my eye).

Traces of divine love appear in certain elements of these ghazals. However, understanding them depends on each reader's interpretive ability and personal engagement with the text. Alongside romantic ghazals, the ghazals of the second half of the 20th century also display, albeit infrequently, elements of rindona (bohemian or antinomian) Sufi poetry. Each of the poets Habibiy, Chustiy, Charxiy, and Sirojiddin Sayyid has at least one such ghazal[15]. For example, Habibiy's rindona ghazal with the radif sharob (wine) features the rarely seen dual imagery of wine and cupbearer: (Matla')

Soqiyo, sungil, g'animat o'tmasin davron, sharob,  
Ko'zlarimdan to'kilur sensiz hama ichgan sharob

(O cupbearer, let not this moment pass in vain without wine, Tears fall from my eyes in your absence – this is the wine others drink).

When analyzed from a Sufi perspective, the poem's elements can be interpreted allegorically: the beloved represents God; wine symbolizes divine love or ecstasy; ruby lips indicate spiritual union; and the cupbearer (soqiyo) represents the spiritual guide or mentor. This symbolic reading is supported by expressions such as "disbelief and faith," "the beloved's separation," and "if my soul departs while I drink divine wine with the beloved"[16].

In the maqta' (final couplet), the lyrical persona expresses his readiness to stake everything – his robe and turban – as collateral in the "tavern of love," where such wine (divine love) is not cheap: (Maqta')

Netkum oxir jomayu dastorini qilmay garov,  
Men Habibiy, dayr ichinda bo'lmasa arzon sharob[17].  
(What can I do but pawn my robe and turban in the end,  
O Habibiy, for in the tavern, this wine is never cheap)[18].

These images – praising intoxication, glorifying the tavern, wine, and cupbearer, and pawning one's garments for wine – form the core of qalandari (bohemian or antinomian) ghazals[19].

Also, patriotic, war-themed, anthems, laments and humorous ghazals are important in showing the spiritual image of the area[20].

#### 4. Conclusion

In the ghazals of the second half of the 20th century, we encounter the joyous lover enraptured by love, the devoted child yearning for the homeland, and the fearless fighter standing against injustice. These poems uplift the spirit with their folkloric tone and positive energy, moving the reader emotionally through songs of longing, maternal love, and the pain of separation. Satirical elements provoke thought, while lyrical expressions of devotion draw the reader into the ghazal's emotional world. Creating such a vivid poetic experience requires not only skill but innate artistic talent, as exemplified by the poets mentioned above.

In the ghazals of the second half of the 20th century, Uzbek poets vividly reflected the social, political, and emotional realities of their time through a rich thematic diversity. Alongside traditional romantic expressions, patriotic, didactic, satirical, and spiritual motifs emerged with strength and artistic brilliance. These works offered not only aesthetic pleasure but also served as ideological instruments shaped by historical context. Through emotional intensity, folkloric tone, and lyrical craftsmanship, the poets conveyed national sentiments, societal values, and timeless human emotions, demonstrating both individual creativity and cultural continuity within the evolving landscape of Uzbek literature.

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