

PAPER

RECONSTRUCTION OF MUSICALITY AND RHYTHM IN THE TRANSLATION OF THE GHAZAL

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges of translating the ghazal — one of the most refined and musical poetic forms of the East — into European languages. The ghazal, deeply rooted in the aruz metrical system, embodies rhythmic precision, emotional intensity, and musicality. However, due to fundamental structural differences between Eastern and Western poetics, preserving its original sound and rhythm poses significant difficulties. Using the works of Alisher Navoiy as a primary reference, this paper analyzes the reconstruction of ghazal form and melody in translation, emphasizing the creative process of re-creation rather than literal transfer. Comparative perspectives involving Babur and Shakespeare further highlight the universality of poetic emotion despite linguistic and metrical divergences.

Key words: ghazal, aruz, translation, musicality, rhythm, melody, poetic system.

Introduction

Poetry is often described as the rarest miracle of the mother tongue. Among the various poetic forms, the ghazal occupies a unique place in Eastern literature for its fusion of lyrical emotion, rhythm, and intricate sound patterns. Originating in Arabic and Persian traditions and flourishing in Turkic and Urdu poetry, the ghazal has served as a vehicle for expressing philosophical reflection, love, and divine yearning.

Translating ghazals into European languages presents complex challenges. The aruz metrical

system, fundamental to Eastern poetic tradition, has no direct equivalent in Western prosody. Consequently, many translators face the dilemma of whether to preserve the meter at the expense of meaning or to re-create the poetic form in a different rhythmic and linguistic structure. The translation of Alisher Navoiy's ghazals into Russian and English demonstrates various approaches to maintaining the form, melody, and emotional resonance of the original text.

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Methodology

The study employs a comparative and descriptive method, focusing on theoretical and practical approaches to poetic translation. It examines translations of Navoiy's ghazals by notable scholars such as Rozhdestvensky (Russian) and K. Mamurov, B. Kholbekova, and D. Sultonova (English).

By comparing the original Uzbek texts with their translations, the research identifies patterns of metrical adaptation, rhythmic reconstruction, and retention of musicality. The study also references the views of translation theorists such as G. Salomov, E. Dunaevsky, and Jiří Levý to establish the theoretical foundation of poetic translation.

Results and Discussion

Cultural and Linguistic Challenges in Ghazal Translation

A ghazal is not merely a sequence of rhyming couplets; it is a musical structure where rhythm, rhyme (qafiya), and refrain (radif) create harmony. Translating such poetry requires balancing the preservation of cultural essence with the adaptation to the target language's phonetic and rhythmic system.

According to G. Salomov, the ideal of poetic translation lies in the unity of content and meter. Yet, due to linguistic asymmetry, it is impossible to preserve all elements. If a poem's aesthetic characteristics consist of ten units, only six to eight can typically be retained in translation. The translator must therefore prioritize the most essential features — rhythm, rhyme, and emotional tone.

E. Dunaevsky notes that “it is an extremely difficult task to re-create the ghazal form in Russian... The clear form, as we think, is impossible to reproduce.” Translating with European poetic structures inevitably alters the appearance and feeling of the original, though it allows freer use of expressive means.

Reconstruction of the Ghazal's Musicality and Rhythm

The aruz meter forms the foundation of classical Eastern poetry. It is based on the repetition of short and long syllables (hijas), organized in complex rhythmic patterns. Unlike Western stress-based meters, aruz relies on quantitative measures of syllable length, making it difficult to reproduce in

Indo-European languages.

In Uzbek poetry, three metrical systems are used:

- **Barmoq** (syllabic or finger-based meter)
- **Aruz** (quantitative meter)
- **Free verse**

The barmoq meter aligns closely with the natural intonation of the Uzbek language, whereas aruz, originating from Arabic and Persian literature, represents a sophisticated and foreign rhythmical discipline. Western translators have experimented with various methods to convey aruz-like rhythm, such as adapting to approximate syllabic equivalence or using free verse that mimics the ghazal's melody.

Jiří Levý outlined three main approaches to poetic translation:

1. Preserving the original meter;
2. Translating into an equivalent but different meter;
3. Using free verse to convey rhythm and meaning.

These principles are crucial in assessing attempts to translate Navoiy's ghazals.

Example: Translation of “Kecha kelgumdur debon...”

Original by **Alisher Navoiy**:

Kecha kelgumdur debon ul sarvi gulro' kelmadi,
Ko'zlarimga kecha tong otguncha uyqu kelmadi.

Translation by **Rozhdestvensky (Russian)**:

Кипарис мой, — ты сказала, — жди меня! — и не пришла.

Я не спал всю ночь, дождался света дня, — ты не пришла.

Rozhdestvensky preserved the ghazal's structure, rhyme scheme (a–a–b–a), and syllabic balance. Although the aruz meter was not fully reconstructed, the translation maintained musicality and an Oriental tone, effectively reflecting Navoiy's emotional rhythm.

By contrast, K. Mamurov's and B. Kholbekova's English versions exhibit differences in rhythm and rhyme but attempt to retain meaning and tone.

K. Mamurov's version emphasizes imagery and emotion, though the imbalance of syllables weakens musical flow. B. Kholbekova's translation restores syllabic balance but alters rhyme form, sacrificing the ghazal's characteristic refrain. D. Sultonova's translation succeeds in preserving radif, rhyme, and emotional essence, albeit with longer lines,

Numbers of syllables in one misra (stanza)																
Original By A.Navoiy																
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Ke	-cha	kel	gum	-dur	de	bon	ul	Sar-	vi	gul	ro'	Kel	ma	di	-	-
Translation by Rojdestvensky																
Ки	па	рис	мой	ты	ска	за	ла	жди	мен	я	и	не	приш	ла	-	-
Translation by Sultonova																
Ha	ving	shown	her	will	to	come	my	miss	tress	that	flo	wer	fai	I'd	t	co
															o	m
															e	

demonstrating that the spirit of the ghazal can survive beyond its metrical constraints.

Preservation of Emotional Tone and Artistic Unity

Translating poetry is not a literal process; it is an act of artistic re-creation. The translator functions as a co-creator, transmitting the poem's mood, symbolism, and rhythm through a new linguistic medium. Musicality in translation can be achieved through phonetic harmony, alliteration, and internal rhythm, even when the original meter cannot be reproduced.

As Salomov argues, accuracy in translation must be assessed not by literal correspondence but by proximity in aesthetic value. True poetic translation seeks harmony between form, sound, and sense — a unity that evokes the same emotional response in the target reader as in the original audience.

Comparative Perspective: Navoiy, Babur, and Shakespeare

The works of Alisher Navoiy, Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, and William Shakespeare, though separated by time, language, and literary tradition, converge in their devotion to poetic rhythm and emotional precision. Each poet transforms rhythm into a vehicle of meaning — an audible expression of inner feeling.

In Navoiy's ghazal "Kecha kelgumdur debon..." ("Said she would come last night..."), the aruz pattern (ramal meter: fa'ilātun fa'ilātun fa'ilātun fa'ilun) generates a musical cadence that mirrors longing and spiritual tension:

Kecha kelgumdur debon ul sarvi gulro kelmadi,
Ko'ngluma orom yo'q, hijron bila yo kelmadi.

(She said she would come last night, but the cypress-faced one came not;

My heart found no peace, neither with union nor with separation.)

Here, the repetition of the "kelmadi" refrain

acts as a rhythmic echo of expectation and disappointment — a core musical device of classical Turkic-Persian verse.

Babur, in contrast, fuses Turkic clarity with Persian elegance. In one of his lyrical couplets, he employs short, syllabic lines that move with conversational ease yet carry emotional density:

Ko'rди yuzingni — jonimdin o'tdi, ey mah!

Jonni fido qilay, agar bo'lsang rozī, ey mah!

(Seeing your face, my soul departed, O moon!

I would give my life if you would consent, O moon!)

Babur's rhythm relies on syllabic cadence and lexical simplicity, creating a musical effect closer to Turkic folk song than to the heavy aruz form.

Shakespeare, in his Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"), employs iambic pentameter, where each line moves in a da-DUM heartbeat rhythm — a stress-based meter typical of English poetics:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

The recurring iambic pulse mirrors the continuity of love and art — the emotional constancy that parallels Navoiy's spiritual devotion and Babur's heartfelt sincerity.

Thus, while Navoiy builds musicality through quantitative rhythm (long and short syllables), Babur through syllabic balance, and Shakespeare through stress-based meter, all three achieve a universal harmony between rhythm and emotion. Their art demonstrates that true lyricism transcends linguistic structure — it is the shared heartbeat of poetic expression.

The works of Navoiy, Babur, and Shakespeare, though rooted in distinct linguistic and cultural systems, share a devotion to poetic rhythm and emotional truth. Navoiy's ghazals express mystical love and moral reflection through aruz rhythm, while Babur's lyricism blends Turkic imagery with Persian influence, emphasizing personal emotion and clarity of thought.

Shakespeare's sonnets, written in iambic pentameter, reflect a different but comparable commitment to musical precision. Both Navoiy and Shakespeare employ sound patterns — alliteration, repetition, and internal rhyme — to intensify feeling. This universality of rhythm and emotion suggests that, despite differences in poetic systems,

the essence of lyric poetry transcends linguistic boundaries.

Comparative analysis reveals that all three poets transform rhythm into emotion: Navoiy through aruz, Babur through syllabic cadence, and Shakespeare through stress-based meter. This demonstrates that the translator's task is not to mechanically reproduce rhythm, but to evoke the same musical feeling — the pulse of poetic experience.

Conclusion

The translation of ghazals represents one of the most delicate and complex challenges in literary translation. The aruz meter, with its quantitative syllabic structure, cannot be fully reconstructed in European languages. However, through creative adaptation — by preserving syllabic balance, rhyme, and melodic tone — translators can re-create the musical and emotional essence of the original.

The study of translations of Navoiy's ghazals illustrates that poetic translation is an art of interpretation rather than duplication. Successful re-creation depends on the translator's sensitivity to rhythm, cultural nuance, and emotional resonance. Comparative insights from Babur and Shakespeare show that poetic musicality, while expressed differently across cultures, shares a common foundation: the human impulse to give sound to emotion.

Thus, the translator of a ghazal becomes not merely an intermediary, but a poet — one who reawakens the melody of the original in a new linguistic voice.

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