

music

Ghazal — A Blend of Classical Music and Modern Lyricism

by A. Z. M. Haider

GHAZAL as a musical form is an exquisite blend of classical melody and modern lyricism. It is a specialized form of music in which poets pour forth their love-laden souls in secret hour. As a matter of fact, love is the principal theme of Ghazals. Although rebel poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, subdued by romantic emotion, poured forth his lyrical agony in some of the elegant Ghazals he wrote in Bengali, it is essentially a form of Urdu poetry which represents the quintessence of Persian and Indian traditions.

Frustration in love, thrill at the sight of beloved, her bewitching beauty, her long flowing hair, her dreamy eyes, her rhythmic movement as she treads her flowery passage lying on green turf and above all erotic passion and poignant pain are the central themes of Ghazals.

To trace to the genesis of this musical form, one has to go to its roots in Dhruwad, Dhammar and Tappa, essentially forms of classical music. Later Dhru-

Ghazal, representing a bridge between the rich Iranian and the Indian traditions were nurtured and nourished under the patronage of Mughal court in India. During the great Mughals Persian poets in large numbers migrated to India and Settled in Delhi and other cities of Uttar Pradesh in India. These Persian poets started writing Ghazals under the patronage of Mughal court. As a matter of fact, Ghazals written before Mirza Ghalib were by and large in Persian.

pad, Dhammar and Tappa were transformed and modernized into Khayal, Thumri and Dadra. Dadra and Thumri are in fact, predecessors of Ghazals.

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Thumri and Dadra, which are precursors of Ghazals, has appealing melody without content. Ghazals plugged in the vacuum by imparting to it

a body in the shape of lyricism.

Although Ghalib and other Indian poets wrote Ghazals in Urdu, one could notice pre-dominant Persian influence on their writings in terms of choice of diction, style and presentation.

Zauq and Ghalib are considered founders of modern Urdu Ghazals. Later outstanding Urdu poets like Bahadur Shah Zafar, Daagh, Momin, Dard etc took to writing Urdu Ghazal and raised it to the height of literary excellence. They were followed by Akbar Allahabadi, Meer, Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Momin Naqvi, Ahmed Faraz, Nasir Kazmi and others who wrote Ghazal with considerable success and contributed to its enrichment and embellishment.

Dadra and Thumri are time-consuming musical forms. It takes at least half

an hour, if not more, to complete the rendering of Dadra and Thumri. Men after the first world war turned busy. They are so much hard pressed for time that they find it difficult to sit for long hours and listen to Dadra and Thumri. They require shorter musical form to satiate their hunger for music. Ghazal as a musical form was evolved as a compromise formula designed to quench peoples thirst for music in shorter time-frame.

Geet is another form of Urdu poetry designed to be sung in shorter time-frame. But Ghazal, as distinguished from Geet, is principally a love song meant to be rendered more aesthetically and with much greater sophistication. Unlike Geet, Ghazal is too deeply rooted to classical music, metre and melody to be extricated from them. Unless an

artiste has a classical base, he or she can not render Ghazal successfully.

Although India is the home of Ghazal, Pakistan has cultivated it with much greater dedication and carried it to its height of glory. Golan Ali is still the reign king in the realm of Ghazal. Mehdi Hasan, Iqbal Banu, Farida Khanam are the noted names in the world of Ghazal in Pakistan. They render Ghazal with such consummate skill that their listeners are stirred to the depth of their emotion. Mehdi Hasan's intensely romantic voice luxuriates with classical melody with such deftness while rendering Ghazals that immortal messages contained in them assure a new meaning.

In India Gagjeet Singh, Saigal, Talat Mahmud, Mohammed Rafiq are noted names in the world of Ghazals in India.

In Bangladesh Ghazal has failed to become a popular musical form mainly because of linguistic impediment. Without understanding message of a Ghazal it is not possible to render it successfully. It one does it, it will be a half-hearted, listless lifeless exercise. To go deep into the message contained in a Ghazal it is necessary to know Urdu. Most of our artistes, who do not know Urdu, are unable to impart their heart and soul to their rendering of Ghazals.

The only Bengali artiste who knows Urdu is Mohammed Asafuddowla. He, therefore, lays bare his heart and soul when he renders Ghazals. Indeed, as a ghazalist he can be ranked with Talat Mahmud and Gagjeet Singh of India and Iqbal Banu and Parvez Mehdi of Pakistan. I dare not compare him with Golan Ali and Mehdi Hasan. Away from the tyranny of red-tepism when Asafuddowla a retired civil servant sits down at a quiet corner in his house to render Ghazal, Manna Dew (heavenly honey) that lies in his voice starts melting casting a magic spell to his rendering of Ghazals. His audience are enchanted.

metaphysics

Time — The Old Puzzling Man

by Mohd Anisur Rahman

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future.
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.*

— T.S. Eliot

ALTHOUGH TIME, the Old Gypsy Man, has been travelling a long way since the beginning of the universe, our efforts to understand its nature is more of a recent thing in the course of human civilization. Considerable amount of studies have been made to reveal the nature of time in the last few centuries, from Galileo-Newton's time till date, so much so, that it has been integrated as an additional dimension along with 'space' (our familiar notion of space with the three coordinate system) to make our dimensional 'space-time' in order to describe the universe we live in. Still, we are far from understanding one of the puzzling aspects of time which is its directionality.

Our familiar idea about time is also hazy. We cannot 'see' time, can only perceive the flow of time, that too unidirectionally, and relate events (an event is something which happens at a particular space at a particular time) through three different demarcations of TIME, as we call, the past, present and future.

We can remember past, feel the present and, at best, imagine the future. Whereas, we are very familiar in dealing with space as we can 'see' and describe it with ease. In fact, difficulty with time arises because it is very different from the three dimensions of space such as in Cartesian coordinate system (length, breadth and height). Much of our understanding about time is related with perception about the progression of time which is constituent to our central awareness system. We seem to be marching ever forward to an uncertain 'future' thrashing down the 'present' into the realm of 'past'. Once an event takes place, it gets unified with our history, the past, whose actuality no one would doubt about. But what it is that makes time march forward only, can it flow backward too — are some of the interesting aspects of time that are subject of many scientific deliberations of today.

Although we perceive the physical reality unidirectional in time, i.e., moving ever forward, physical laws have something different to say about time. Successful equations of physics like Newton's laws, Maxwell's equations, Einstein's General Relativity, Schrodinger equation etc. are time-reversible or symmetrical in time. That is, the equations remain effectively unaltered even when the direction of time is reversed. It is like a whirlpool in

a river which would pull a drifter with same force even if its spin were reversed. Accepting that the physical laws are time-reversible and can be translated into physical reality, some bizarre deductions ensue. Let's suppose, someone is having a cup of tea standing near a tea-corner. Another fellow inadvertently dashes his hand from behind causing the tea-cup to fall, spilling the content over cloths, which shatters into pieces upon hitting the ground. If we were to reverse this set of events, i.e., to run backward in time, we should see first the shattered pieces gather themselves on ground, assemble into a cup, tea particles also gathers from cloths, pour into the cup, which finally jumps into the hand and so on. Our day-to-day experience about physical reality would rule out such possibility of reversible events taking place, although, probability of such bizarre occurrences do have a place in physics.

Considering the success of physical laws in explaining nature's underlying orders, if we were to accept the time-reversibility of events such as mentioned above to hold true in physical reality we are in real problem. For, we, or at least our remote future generations, could then see a man beginning his life out from the grave, entering his 'youth' with a very 'youthful' wife, pass middle age, 'demarrying' at an 'old' age, then pass

through the childhood and finally ending up into mother's womb (I don't think mothers are going to like this end!). Sounds funny! But, at least part of the scientific community consider such reversibilities as one of the probabilities in the contracting universe. (It should be mentioned here that our universe is in the expansion phase now, the galaxies are receding from one another. The expansion, as believed by many researchers, would slow down to almost zero in remote future. Should the expansion stop and a contracting phase begins — a scenario in the closed universe — galaxies would get closer and one day all the heavenly bodies would collide together in what is known the Big Crunch that could further start sprouting space-time like that of Big Bang, which in turn, given sufficient span of time, could evolve into an universe like that of ours as we see today.)

While physical laws do leave rooms for time-reversibilities to take place in physical reality, or at least predict so, one of the strong arguments for things do not happen and would not happen spontaneously in the reverse way is put forth by the second law of thermodynamics. This law asserts that entropy of an isolated system always increases with time (or remains constant for a reversible system.) Entropy is a kind of bulk property of matter, akin to that of

temperature. For example, there is no concept of temperature for a single particle, it emerges as a collective property when we take a bulk of particles. Entropy is a quantitative measure of how disorganized a physical system is and can, roughly, be taken as the manifest disorder in a system. For a system in isolation from the rest of the universe (our universe may be a closed system although no definite conclusion is available yet), its total entropy increases. So a highly organized configuration will, gradually, tend to give way to a disorganized one. In our previous example, tea-cup-in-hand is in an ordered state whereas the shattered pieces with tea spilled all over are in a disordered form. Although the tea-cup is not an isolated system altogether, since it interacts with the surrounding and dissipates some heat energy, it is definitely a case of entropy increase according to the second law of thermodynamics. But gathering of the shattered pieces, pouring of the tea spontaneously and jumping of the tea-cup back into the hand of the person are something which is not allowed since that would mean phase change from a disorderly state to an orderly state. Shifting towards a more materialistic view of the macroscopic world, we see things eventually get old, crumble and fall into ruins. Although environmental effects accelerate the ruin, each macroscopic object is subject

to decay given sufficient span of time. It appears as if things have a natural tendency to go 'disordered' (Murphy's law in action indeed!). Thus it is the law of entropy increase with time that gives time an arrow, a direction which distinguishes the past and the future which Newton's laws, Einstein's theory of relativity etc. do not care to do.

In the end it looks like that the second law of thermodynamics does not go at par with other successful laws of physics in their effort to explain the nature and role of time. It also appears that there exists severe discrepancies between what we consciously feel about the flow of time with an arrow in forward direction and what theories asserts about the reality of physical world. Probably this could be resolved only with a deeper understanding about the very nature of our consciousness and its complex interaction with physical reality. But those, specially the believers in the uniqueness of our existence in this universe, would perhaps agree that there exists some kind of 'missing link' between the 'nature' and 'place' of time existing in the theories and our perception and experience about the 'aging' of the universe in respect of time. It could well be that physical theories need some reinforcements to accommodate time-asymmetries to complete the description about the universe as a whole and our place in it.

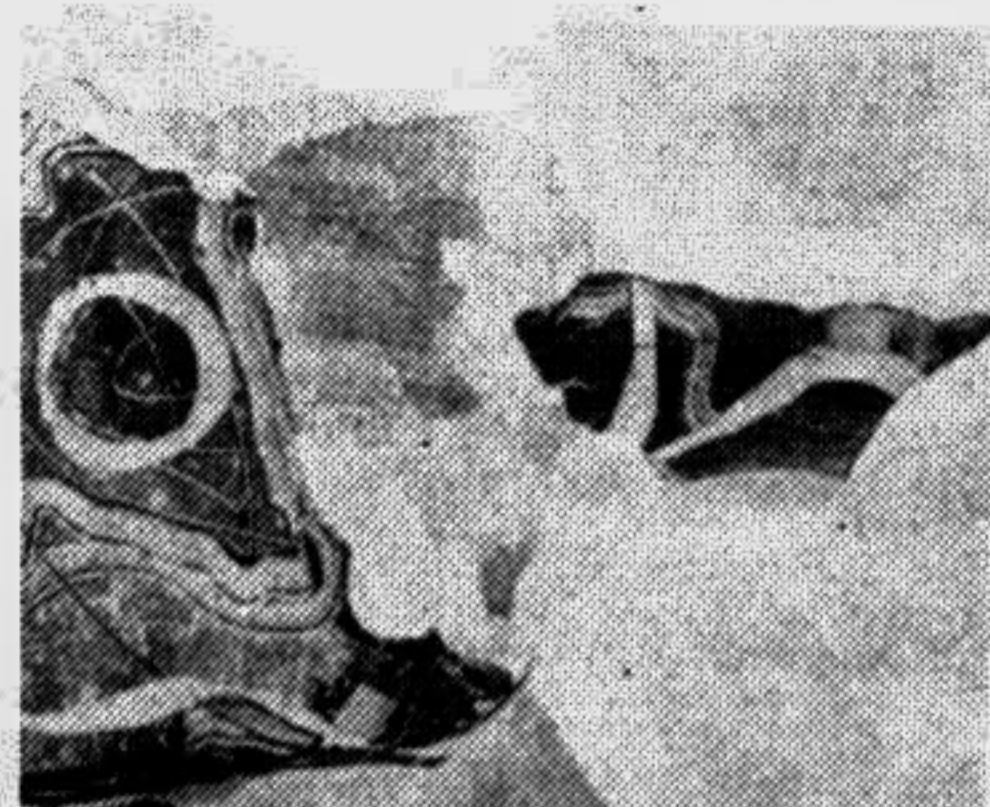
reflections

When Bombs are Dropped

by Nuzhat Amin Mannan

IF 1998 should go down in history books for the dropping of the nuclear bomb again, 1998 should also be going down for another very different kind of bomb dropping. Arundhati Roy detonated powerful stuff all by herself in 'End of Imagination'. Her unguiled prose, whacking humour and rightful anger make a serious combustion, strong enough to make one feel that one was truly caving under universe shattering, history-splitting soul-blistering threat.

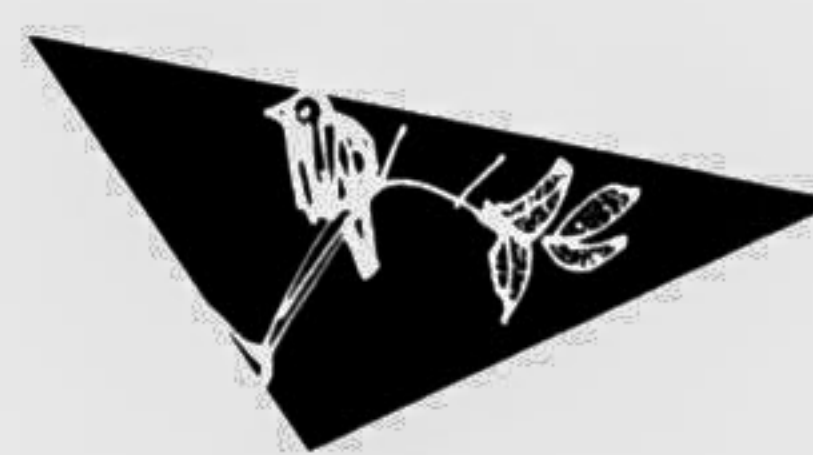
Many I know who read the abridged version of 'End of Imagination' were completely taken by it. Arundhati Roy had repeatedly talked about or atleast was quoted as saying that the book that she had written was behind her and she was not about to let it, (one felt) dictate her future — in other words, she would write when she was ready to do so and people would see if they felt smashed or exulted by what she wrote. The God of Small Things, a couple of interviews and then 'End of Imagination'... most of us felt simply hooked... not just exulted, certainly not smashed. I knew, I felt elated because she had bludgeoned the nukes so soundly, but then that mantrically calm, benign speech on her paper



napkin for her friend in New York... well, deep down inside I dimly felt what Diana, the Princess's fans might have felt when Diana put her gowns up for auction for charity. Beautiful women, successful... must be so noble as well? Uncomfortably, I was reminded also of the other A R — Aishwarya Ray who has pledged her eyes for the visually impaired. It took an instant to regain myself — because Arundhati is not merely beautiful (yes, even she knows men fawn over her conspicuously which like limitless luxurious towels in posh hotels, one supposes, she doesn't need) — Arundhati Roy is wise in ways many just aren't. She doesn't mess things up

doesn't disappoint. Strange, that her friend would have thought 'death' could gloss for all times to come the beauty that Arundhati's life has at the moment; reminds one of what the car crash had done for Diana, I suppose — but unblinking in her fame Arundhati Roy just drives very forcefully a few simple truths home, knocked off in that shock are those who wait around for celebs to repeat their performances. Really, who in their right minds expect anyone to be a Peoples' Princess, or a beauty pageant queen or a bestseller Booker winner to keep on and on outdoing and outshad-owing what they have already done? But

then, celebs are entitled to have their perceptions about the fawning, nagging, annoying world too, just like any one of us. We are told, as the nuclear test went ahead — something decisive happened coinciding with Arundhati Roy's world — her world heaved and died. Instead of having becoming cremated like most things that die — she just probably got



know, she speaks for the six thousand and four hundred million years of the world and one just simply feels infected by her indignation.

In equal measure, however some of us may have felt bizarrely numb to the nuclear wasteland that she writes of — white dense clouds, a speedy spread of a quiet smouldering heat, a winter in which we all will huddle together and die — equally, at last — doesn't that just sound awesome? Not at all unlike the pictures evoked in religious warnings about doomsday! Not for one second does one want to trivialize the sheer destructive impact that a nuclear attack

her world' or 'republic' whatever immortalized because of her pain and concern worded in unmistakable, unfictionalized rebuke. Our fawning eyes lit up again, even though she didn't intend it too, even though she really isn't that interested in it. All of it is altruistic, we

