

## DIWAN-E SHAMS: GHAZAL NUMBER 2430—PART II

### *Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī / Ahmad Javaid*

The Persian ghazal has long served as a luminous vessel for articulating the metaphysical experiences of Sufis, but no one has employed it with greater mastery and lyrical density than Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273). Among the vast corpus of his *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ghazal number 2430 stands out as a paradigmatic instance of what may be termed a “metaphysical itinerary”—a structured poetic unfolding of the soul’s journey from finitude to infinity, from the veils of form to the presence of Essence.

In Part I, we noticed how the opening with a declaration of the seeker’s departure from the ephemeral realm (*dīr-i fānī*) toward the station of permanence (*baqāʿ*), the poem immediately presented the wayfarer upon the active path of realization—marked by certainty (*yaqīn*). In this part of the translation and the explanations show how across its thirteen couplets, the poem charts a layered ascent that traverses the physical, psychic, cosmic, and noetic planes. In doing so, it synthesizes and presents central themes of Islamic cosmology, using Qur’ānic allusions, and the ontology of *insān-e kāmīl*—the Perfected Human.

Each couplet advances the transformation of the self. The soul is first shown to transcend bodily limitations and lower faculties—*naḥs*, *ʿaql*, and *rūḥ-i ḥaywānī*—until it is affirmed as *jān-i jāni*, the

---

*Diwān-e Shams* of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, Ghazal Number 2430 was explained by Ahmad Javaid in a series of lectures in Lahore. Ahmad Javaid (whose full legal name is Javaid Ameer Usmani) is an accomplished Rūmī scholar whose insights into *Diwān-e Shams* are rooted in the metaphysics of Sufi poetry. His grasp of western and eastern intellectual traditions and his deep roots in the Islamic spiritual traditions make him a unique commentator of Rūmī. This rare combination of experiential knowledge and theoretical understanding of philosophy of being has profound meaning for seekers of Truth. This is the second and last part of the lecture. The translation attempts to preserve the oral texture of the lectures.

*Islamic Sciences*, Vol. 18 (Winter 2025) No. 2  
ISSN 1929-9435 (Print) • ISSN 1929-9443 (Online)

© 2025 by the Center for Islamic Sciences

“soul of the soul,” a metaphysical rank connoting both proximity to the Divine and inner plenitude. The traveler is then portrayed as ascending through the celestial spheres (*aflāk*), adorned with the signs of divine beauty (*jamāl*), while moving toward *bī-nishānī*—the realm of unmarkedness and unknowability, echoing Qurʾānic worldview of soul’s ascent.

The ghazal then turns to the interior states of the seeker: absorption in divine *sawdā* (rapturous preoccupation), loss of ego (*bī-khudī*), and intoxication with the *ṣaḥbā* of divine proximity. Rūmī anchors these states in an epistemology of divine instruction, invokes the *madrasah* of the Divine Names, through which the seeker is initiated not merely into theological knowledge but into the very truths that underlie creation.

This installment begins with the second couplet and completes the ghazal.

---

**Keywords:** Rūmī; *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ghazal 2430; mystical journey; Persian poetry; soul, intellect, and imagination in Islamic thought; reason and rationality in Islam; poetics of Persian language; Persian-Urdu poetry; Iqbal and Rūmī; Islamic philosophy.



ای آن که بر اسب بقا از دیر فانی می روی  
دانا و بینای رهی آن سو که دانی می روی  
بی همره جسم و عرض بی دام و دانه و بی غرض  
از تلخکامی می رهی در کامرانی می روی  
نی همچو عقل دانه چین نی همچو نفس پرز کین  
نی روح حیوان زمین تو جان جانی می روی  
ای چون فلک دریافته ای همچو مه دریافته  
از ره نشانی یافته در بی نشانی می روی  
ای غرقه سودای او ای بیخود از صهبای او  
از مدرسه اسمای او اندر معانی می روی  
ای خوی تو چون آب جو داده زمین را رنگ و بو  
تا کس نپندارد که تویی ارمغانی می روی  
کو سایه منصور حق تا فاش فرماید سبق  
کز مستعینی می رهی در مستعانی می روی  
شب کاروانها زین جهان بر می رود تا آسمان  
تو خود به تنهایی خود صد کاروانی می روی  
ای آفتاب آن جهان در ذره ای چونی نهان  
وی پادشاه شه نشان در پاسبانی می روی  
ای بس طلسمات عجب بستی برون از روز و شب  
تا چشم پندارد که تو اندر مکانی می روی

ای لطف غیبی چند تو شکل بهاری می شوی

وی عدل مطلق چند تو اندر خزانی می روی

آخر برون آ زین صور چادر برون افکن ز سر

تا چند در رنگ بشر در گله بانی می روی

ای ظاهر و پنهان چو جان وی چاکر و سلطان چو جان

کی بینمت پنهان چو جان در بی زبانی می روی



*O you who ride the steed of abidingness, from this perishing tavern you depart,  
Clear-eyed and wise upon the path—you go where you already know the chart.*

*With no companion of body or form, no snare, no bait, no selfish plea,  
You leave behind the bitter world, toward felicity you flee.*

*Not like the intellect that picks at grains, nor like the self with hate inflamed,  
Not soul of beast nor breath of dust—you are the soul of soul, unnamed.*

*O you, like the spheres, finely spun; like the moon ablaze, undone,  
You've glimpsed the signpost on the road—and now you go where signs are none.*

*Drowned in the rapture of His love, lost in His ruby wine so deep,  
From the madrasa of His Names you walk into the meanings that secrets keep.*

*Your nature flows like a mountain stream, bestowing fragrance, hue, and bloom—  
None can suspect, seeing your grace, you journey giftless into doom.*

*Where is the shadow of Ḥaqq's Mansūr, to boldly teach this sacred flight—  
You've left the one who leans on Him, to reach the One of endless Might.*

*While caravans at night ascend, from this world to the sky above,  
You in your solitude alone—surpass a hundred in your love.*

*O sun of that unearthly realm, how can you hide in dust so small?  
O king beyond all kingly signs, you pass as mere sentinel to all.*

*What talismans you've loosed and bound, beyond the cage of night and day—  
That eyes imagine you within a space and fixed upon a way.*

*O hidden grace, how oft you wear the springtime's face, its sweet perfume!  
O perfect justice, cloaked again—you pass amid a world in gloom.*

*At last come forth from form's disguise, cast off the veil, the colored skin—  
How long will you, in human hue, herd these shadows from within?*

*O you, both hidden and revealed—slave and sultan, both entwined—  
When shall I see you, veiled like soul, passing in silence, undefined?*



## Commentary

### Couplet 2

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ʿarāž bī dām o dāna o bī-gharāž*

*Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī dar kāmrānī mī-ravī*

*Unaccompanied by body and attribute, by trap, by bait, by motive,*

*You are delivered from bitterness and advance into felicity.*

## Commentary

As we noted previously while examining the opening couplet of this ghazal, it was observed in the introductory remarks that this poem centers upon the human being and his essential reality. To express this within a more familiar register: the theme of this ghazal is the *idea of man* in its actualized condition.

In the opening couplet, the human being—bearing his essential reality—is portrayed as having resolved to traverse the various stations of existence. His movement toward perfection is articulated within a cosmic and universal context; that is, it presents how the essential reality of the human being, in his microcosmic constitution, becomes dynamically active. The second verse displays this same movement in its *microcosmic* mode: in the previous line, the human being appeared within the *cosmic* context; here, he appears within his *personal* or *psychic* context—that is, within the context of the *anfus*. This verse thus shifts the ontological frame from the *āfāqī* (cosmic) to the *anfusī* (interior). Let us now examine what is being said.

It depicts how the human being, while situated within the cosmological hierarchy of being, advances with resolute intent toward a transcendent telos. That is to say, while dwelling within form, and without exiting form, he remains the bearer of his essential reality, and within his own psychic context, he proceeds through the stages and stations of his perfection—indeed, of a *dynamic realization* of his essence.

This is the expanded implication: even in the first couplet, the human being is portrayed as one who has succeeded in directing his intention toward the truth of existence situated within the cosmic order, and in actualizing that orientation. In other words, he has succeeded in attaining the Real within the framework of his microcosmic self. You understand this, yes?

The *active realization* of one's essential reality—this is the greatest achievement of the human being, for it entails that he does not renounce his form, does not relinquish the conditions and constraints necessarily entailed

by his embodiment. Without violating the intrinsic boundaries of his form, he establishes an active relation with his essence and with reality. This is the supreme attainment for man, for it means he reaches his essence while preserving all the definitional constituents of his being. And the definition of the human being is not possible without form. That is to say, *man by definition is a reality within form*. Is that clear? In this light, Mawlānā delineates the various dimensions of human perfection and success. He now describes a second aspect of this success.

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ‘araž*—Thus, even while abiding within the formal structure of the cosmos, the seeker remains in a state of conjunction with a reality that transcends the cosmos. Further, while remaining within the limits of form and the personal boundaries of embodiment, he actualizes and attains that very reality which by its nature demands transcendence of the cosmos. The seeker, without breaching his own psychic limits, realizes and discovers that transcendent reality. He attains it.

In these two verses, Mawlānā narrates the story of one and the same reality attained across two distinct ontological contexts—one destination reached by two divergent paths. In the first couplet: *reality without-within-ness*; in the second: *reality within-within-ness*. And now he says:

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ‘araž bī dām o dāna o bī-gharaž*—that is, without the accompaniment of body and of those qualities that are incident upon the body; without allegiance to the laws of corporeality. *Bī dām o dāna*—without falling into any trap, without being lured by any bait or seduced by its appeal. *Bī-gharaž*—without deception by the illusion of gain, without being prey to desire, without becoming entangled in any form of need or interest misaligned with one’s essential reality, without any attachment incompatible with the ontological purity of one’s being.

That is to say, *bī-gharaž* here signifies *existential sincerity*—a purity of being. For the journey toward perfection is not undertaken upon a corrupted mount. If the traveler is tainted, the path and the destination alike become corrupted. You, however, are such a traveler who has attained *existential sincerity*—in order to become the bearer of the pure reality of existence, and in order to attain access to that pure existential truth. Thus, *bī-gharaž* alludes to this *purity* which is the necessary provision for reaching the Real. Is that clear?

### **On the Semantic Proximity between ‘Araž and Gharaž**

The words *‘araž* and *gharaž* are not merely united by rhyme; they also share a degree of semantic kinship. For *‘araž* fulfills a temporary requirement of *jawhar* (substance). For instance, a wall requires whiteness, and this requirement is fulfilled by whiteness entering into it as an *‘araž*. The *jawhar* needs expansion

and differentiation within its definition, and this need is fulfilled by the *a'raẓ* (accidents). Thus, the entire metaphysical and material economy of *jawhar* and *'araẓ*—that is, of corporeal substance and its attributes—operates under the law of *gharaẓ* (motive or end). Do you follow?

So what is *'araẓ*? It is the temporal *gharaẓ* of the *jawhar*. This semantic resemblance intensifies the conceptual elegance of the verse or, rather, allows its conceptual elegance to be disclosed.

**On the Second Hemistich: *Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī dar kāmranī mī-rawī***

You are being liberated from the bitterness of failure. Failure is bitter, is it not? *Talkhkāmī* literally denotes the bitterness of the palate. It also refers to despair (*yās*), and similarly, it may refer to enduring failure. One thing remains constant in all these senses: the emotion indicated is of a persistent kind. If it denotes despair, then the despair is absolute; if it denotes anger or aversion, then that anger is enduring; and if it signifies failure, then it is an abiding failure.

One of the fundamental etiquettes of reading classical poetry is to grasp the full semantic field and etymological genealogy of its central words. What I am indicating here is that sweetness may dissipate—that is, sweetness in the palate is fleeting and may easily vanish—but bitterness, once settled in sensation, does not pass easily. Even on the physical level, people can testify to this. Is that not so?

Hence, the kind of failure and incompleteness that had been accepted as destiny—the very structure of form-based existence, with its imposed limits, laws, and strictures—had been internalized as irreversible. Form and reality had been assigned the status of two permanently divergent streams, and the human being had come to accept this dichotomy.

Yet you—O human being!—even while residing in form, are not dominated by the laws of form. You possess an *active relation* with your essence, or rather, with that truth of being which you share with the structure of form. You possess an *active realization* of that essence. Therefore, when speaking of you as *form*, one must allow for the qualification that you are unlike other formal entities that dwell within the world of form. In their case, form is *jawhar*; in your case, it is *'araẓ*. Do you follow?

For other things, form is their substance. But for the human being, form is an *'araẓ*. Please remember this meaning. And this ties everything together: *Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī*—you are being delivered from the bitterness of failure. *Dar kāmranī mī-rawī*—and you soar into the heights of felicity; you journey through the domain of success.

There is a rhetorical symmetry here as well: the common element *kām* in *talkhkhāmī* and *kāmvrānī*. When the focus is placed on *kāmvrānī*, it provides clarity regarding the meaning of *talkhkhāmī*. Here, *talkhkhāmī* is being used in the sense of *failure* (*nākāmī*).

### On the Word *Kām*

The original meaning of *kām* is “palate.” Its second meaning is “desire fulfilled,” that is, the state in which a wish has been realized. For example, the beloved is called *kām-i jān*—the fulfillment of the soul’s desire. Thus, in this verse, *kām* signifies the state of *bā-murādī* (realized desire). *Talkhkhāmī* is *nā-murādī* (unfulfilled desire). And yet, this *murād* is only conceived in the mind, not practically attained. That is the state of *talkhkhāmī*. Do you follow?

### Intermediate Translation (*Sharḥ*)

Let us now offer a translation of moderate fidelity—one that adds something to the literal rendering. In this version, we refer to the human being as a wayfaring soul (*musāfir-i manzil-yāfta*)—a traveler in the state of arrival, journeying toward his destination. Do you follow?

If *ḥaqīqat* (the Real) is the destination, then movement toward it occurs in the mode of attainment, not in the mode of deprivation. Do you understand? And no stage of its attainment, no moment of proximity, can ever justify halting the journey toward it. That is, the very fact of having attained it necessitates further journeying. This is a destination in which the path never ends. Do you follow?

This is the essential nature and structure of reality itself—and such is also the nature of the desire for the Real: the seeker of truth does not delimit his seeking, in order to remain attuned to the indeterminacy of the Real. Is that clear?

### Couplet 2

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ‘arāž bī dām o dāna o bī-gharāž*  
*Az talkhkhāmī mī-rahī dar kāmvrānī mī-rawī*

The *active realization* of one’s essential reality—this is the greatest of human attainments. For in this, the human being is not required to relinquish his form, nor to disavow the constitutive laws and boundaries of that form. Without breaking the intrinsic limits of his own formal constitution, he is able to establish a living and active connection with his essence and with reality. This is the apex of human success: that one reaches one’s essence while preserving the integral components of one’s definition. And the human definition is not conceivable apart from form. Man, by definition, is *a reality within form*. Is this

not so?

It is in light of this that Mawlānā enumerates the stages of human perfection and the various dimensions of human success. He now turns to a second aspect of that success.

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ‘arāž*—even while abiding within the formal structures of the cosmos, the seeker remains in a state of union with a truth that transcends the cosmos. Further, while remaining within the personal and psychic bounds imposed by form, he actualizes and attains that very truth which, by its nature, demands transcendence. He realizes it, discovers it, and arrives at it—without shattering the internal framework of his own existence. These two verses narrate the journey toward one truth attained through two distinct ontological contexts, or the arrival at one destination through two different paths. Do you see? In the first verse: reality *without-within-ness*; in the second: reality *within-within-ness*.

Now he says:

*Bī hamrah-i jism o ‘arāž bī dām o dāna o bī-gharāž*—without body and without the properties that are incident upon it; without accompanying the laws of corporeality; *without trap or bait or motive*—that is, without falling into the snare of desire, without being lured by attraction, without being deceived by the illusion of benefit; *bī-gharāž*—that is, without hope, aim, or desire of any kind that fails to correspond to your essential reality, that is discordant with the ontological purity of your being. Here, *bī-gharāž* denotes *existential sincerity*, a condition of purity. For the journey toward perfection cannot be undertaken on an impure mount. If the traveler is impure, then neither the road nor the destination will remain pure. You, however, are such a traveler who has attained existential sincerity, in order to become a bearer of pure ontological reality, and to gain access to that reality through purity. Thus, *bī-gharāž* here alludes to *purity*—as the only adequate provision for access to the Real. Do you follow?

### **On the Semantic Proximity of ‘arāž and gharāž**

*‘Arāž* and *gharāž* are not simply end-rhymes; they exhibit semantic proximity as well. For *‘arāž* fulfills a transient requirement of *jawhar* (substance). A wall requires whiteness, and whiteness fulfills that need by entering into it as an *‘arāž*. *Jawhar* requires expansion and variety in its definition, and this requirement is fulfilled by its *a‘rāž* (accidents). Therefore, within the economy of *jawhar* and *‘arāž*—that is, of the material body and its attributes—the governing law is that of *gharāž*. Do you follow?

What is *‘arāž*? It is the temporary *gharāž* of *jawhar*. This semantic resemblance enhances the conceptual elegance of the verse—or rather,

reveals it.

**On: *Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī dar kāmrānī mī-rawī***

You are being liberated from the bitterness of failure. Failure is bitter, is it not? *Talkhkāmī* signifies the bitterness of the palate; it also denotes despair, and likewise enduring failure. What unites all these senses is their persistence. If it signifies despair, it is an absolute despair; if anger or resentment, then enduring rage; if failure, then a failure that abides.

One of the basic etiquettes of classical poetics is that one must be aware of the entire semantic genealogy and system of meaning of its foundational words. I am here suggesting that sweetness dissipates—the sweetness of the palate departs easily. Bitterness, however, once it settles into the sensation, does not depart easily. Even physically, this can be confirmed by experience. Is that not so?

Now, that form of failure and incompleteness which had come to be accepted as destiny—the entire system of formal existence, with its bounds and constraints, laws and regulations—had come to be seen as fixed. Form and reality had come to be understood as two irreconcilable currents. This view had been accepted.

But now, the seeker is liberated from this entire structure of inaccessibility and failure. Who are you, O human being? Even while residing in form, you are not dominated by its laws. You bear an active relation to your essence—or to that reality which is shared by you and the entire system of form. You hold an *active realization* of it.

Therefore, even when speaking of you as *form*, one must allow for a caveat: you are not like other formal entities within the world of form. For them, form is *jawhar*; for you, it is *‘araḡ*. Do you understand? For other things, form is their substance. For the human being, it is an *accident*. Please remember this distinction—it connects to everything we have said.

*Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī*—you are escaping the bitterness of failure. *Dar kāmrānī mī-rawī*—you soar into the heights of success. You travel within the domain of felicity. And there is here also a semantic symmetry: *talkhkāmī* and *kāmrānī* share the common root *kām*. If we attend to the meaning of *kām* in *kāmrānī*, it will clarify the meaning of *talkhkāmī*. Here, *talkhkāmī* is used in the sense of *nākāmī*—failure.

**On the Word *Kām***

The original meaning of *kām* is “palate.” Its secondary meaning is “attained desire,” the condition of fulfilled longing. The beloved, for example, is called

*kām-i jān*—the longing of the soul fulfilled. Here, then, *kām* is used in the second sense: *talkhkāmī* denotes the bitterness of unfulfilled desire; *kām-rānī* denotes fulfillment. And this fulfillment is present in the mind but not yet in actual possession. This is the state of *talkhkāmī*. Do you follow?

### **Sharḥ (Elucidation of the Second Couplet)**

Let us now offer a translation of intermediate density, in which the literal meaning is expanded upon without departing from its semantic field. Here, the human being will be described as a *wayfarer who has attained his destination*—that is, one who journeys toward the final station while already bearing within himself the condition of arrival. Do you follow?

If *ḥaqīqat* (Reality) is the destination, then the journey toward it unfolds not in a condition of lack, but in a condition of possession. Do you understand? And no attainment of this Reality—no matter how perfect—ever provides sufficient grounds for halting the journey toward it. That is, even its attainment demands continued movement. It is a destination upon which the path never terminates. You understand, don't you?

This is the intrinsic nature and architecture of *ḥaqīqat*—and this is likewise the nature of the desire for Reality: that the seeker of truth never renders his seeking finite, in order to remain proportionate to the indeterminacy of the Real. Is that clear?

Now observe this: in the co-presence of a Reality that is undefined, and a seeker who is defined by his seeking of it, the wayfarer increasingly divests himself of determinacy. Do you understand? What is *form*? It is the condition of being limited by definition. And what does the realization of Reality require? That one not allow such determinacy to become a permanent abode. If determinacy is a dwelling, then one must reside therein like a conscious tenant—not like a property-owner. For the one who claims to own the house is, in truth, owned by it.

Do you not see? One who owns a house may possess the deed, but in practice, he is possessed by the house—he cannot easily leave it. Whereas one who lives on rent enjoys freedom: he may dwell here today and elsewhere tomorrow. But once he builds or buys a house, he becomes the house's possession, even while claiming to possess it. For man cannot truly possess anything without becoming its possession in return—whether that thing be a table or chair, earth or sky.

Thus, man must choose: shall I become the property of a table, or of dust, or of heaven?

The only path by which man can form a relationship of ownership with

a thing without being owned by it, is by refraining from rendering it into conventional or habitual ownership. That is to say, where a man becomes the property of a thing, without claiming to be its owner.

This is that *ontological condition* in which man either acquires the space to be joined with his essence—or else secures, with a brutal finality, his separation from it. In both scenarios, the outer form may appear similar: a full ontological and conscious fulfilment may accompany both connection with the Real and separation from it.

Do you understand? That even when severed from Reality, a person may experience a kind of existential and conscious fullness—and likewise, when joined with Reality, this same fulfilment may manifest through a kind of experiential resemblance.

These, then, are among the conditions and boundaries of the human being.

Now observe: in the backdrop of this discussion, it becomes clear that when a man has acquired attunement—both ontologically and mentally—to a Reality that is non-determinate, he also begins to liberate himself from his own unnecessary determinations. That is the significance of the phrase *bī hamrah-i jism o ‘arāž*—that “I am a body,” but that bodily states and conditions become manifest in me; that I, as body, am a *jawhar*; and that when the *jawhar* is painted over, when certain *ṣuwar* (forms) are appended to it, when various qualities are added to it—these are its *‘arāž* (accidents).

Now this *jawhar*, in order to remain existentially and cognitively diverse, seeks *‘arāž*. It requires them, so that it may be preserved in a state of existential plurality, and so that its epistemic configurations may also remain variable.

To reside within form, then, is to preserve the capacity to move from one form to another—a condition that is, in fact, a grace, a form of success. Do you follow?

This is the function of *jawhar* and *‘arāž* in the world of form: if the *jawhar* continues to be a bearer of accidents, then this means that the restrictions of form do not bind it with rigidity. That is, even while wearing the shackles of form, it retains the capacity for movement. For while remaining a *jawhar*, its definitions, its intellectual configurations, and the templates through which it expresses its existence continue to shift. Do you understand?

In this way, it escapes the suffocating monotony that form would otherwise impose.

Here, *jism* and *‘arāž* carry multiple meanings, but we are presently concerned with the first: body and the ever-changing modalities of corporeality.

*Jawhar*, in philosophical terms, is that which does not require anything extrinsic for its subsistence. *‘Araḥ* is that which does require something other than itself in order to subsist. This is the technical sense, though we will not delve further into that domain here.

The verse asserts: *you proceed without the fetters of body and corporeality*. That is, you have not shackled yourself with these. You are a body, and yet you are undergoing the experience of liberation from the very chains of embodiment. Or, to phrase it differently: in order to render yourself indeterminate, you have awakened within yourself—vigorously and with great movement—a profound existential sincerity. So much so that in both your being and your becoming, the constraints of body and corporeality are no longer indispensable.

Let me now elaborate this further: the human being is a spiritual reality with a dual context. A spiritual essence for whom the bodily context is necessary. A spiritual essence for whom *form* is necessary. You understand this, yes?

This spiritual essence, in its ultimate and universal context, is metaphysical. We may say, then, that the human being is like the word *ṭabi‘ī*—a word whose permanent meanings are metaphysical.

Do you follow? The human being is thus in motion—on a journey.

Hold this in mind: that you are traversing your own essence, having liberated yourself from the conditions imposed by your compulsory context. You are journeying through that Reality which is a Reality in relation to you, and a Reality in its transcendence from you.

Understand this well: the Reality which man seeks, which he makes his goal and purpose, is not itself human. That is, it subsists both in relation to man and outside of relation to man, and is sought by man in both modes.

This is among the distinctive honours of the human being: that he can *personalize* the Real, and also seek it in a state that transcends any relation to himself. If you retain this in mind, you will now see the meaning of the verse: that you, without *jism* and *‘araḥ*—without being shackled to form and its boundaries, and having become purified of the constraints and conditions of form—have awakened and activated your original existential and cognitive purity, and have begun this journey.

That is to say, you are fulfilling the true demands of being a *wayfarer*.

And the truest demand of being a wayfarer is that one purify oneself of every condition of settlement. Who is the true wayfarer? He who is not even slightly settled in any one place. And what are *jism* and *‘araḥ*? They are *residence*—the need to be fixed in place; they are shackles upon the feet of the traveler.

Do you understand?

My being a body, my being Pakistani, my being Indian—these are the hindrances to my being a traveler. They are the nameplates of my house: *I am Indian, I am Pakistani*. These are the conditions of *residency*; and they are the obstacles to *wayfaring*.

You, however, as a true traveler, have purified yourself of these and now advance in purity. In the first phrase of the hemistich, the principle is given; in the next, its practical actualization is displayed:

*Bī dām o dāna o bī-gharaž*—that is, the conditions of being without body and *‘araž* are now present in you. Or, being without body and *‘araž* is now a qualified state you have achieved. And what is the *prequalification* for being without body and accident? It is being free of *bait* and *trap* and *motive* and *greed*. Do you follow?

If we are to say of someone: “He remains in form, but is a vessel of Reality”—then we must show that he has exited the gravitational field of form. That he has escaped its determinism. That his desires, his needs, his dependencies have gone beyond the system of form.

Now we are shown: you are free from the *trap*, indifferent to the *bait*, and purified of all *motive*.

Now do you understand?

### **On the Notion of *dām* (Trap)**

*Dām* signifies that determinate or externally imposed condition which lies outside of me yet gains total control over my identity. It usurps the entire field of my possibilities, comes to possess my entire being, and assumes the role of defining my existence. Do you see?

This world is a *trap*, and within this trap lies a *bait*—one that corresponds to the degradation of the lower self (*nafs*). This world is a web that keeps me tethered to the level of the *nafs*; and the mechanism by which it keeps me content in that lowly state is the *bait* (*dāna*). Is this clear?

And the justification for remaining on these degraded levels of the *nafs*—the true reason why one abides there—is *gharaž*: a low desire, a base aim, a petty inclination that finds continual satisfaction in this world. The world keeps fulfilling this desire and, in doing so, distracts me from my essence, veiling from me the possibility of turning toward that which lies beyond it. You understand this, yes?

Thus, you fulfill the *anfusi* conditions of purification, and also meet the *āfāqi* demands of indeterminacy. *Bī dām o dāna o bī-gharaž*—this means: to

possess cosmic evidences of your inner purity, and *bī jism o ʿarāž*—to fulfill the demand for metaphysical indeterminacy from within, to bear its interior witness. In this way, you have entered into a state of existential sincerity and purity through which you are liberated from both the *anfusī* and *āfāqī* orders of form.

Now, every motion that serves you in this journey delivers you from one *manzil* (station) to the next—not merely from path to destination, but within a continuum of destinations. For if the entire ontological context becomes indeterminate, then there is no real difference between the first step and the thousandth. If the *Whole* is indeterminate, then each of its parts too must partake in that indeterminacy. If the *purity of existence* is a whole, then each of its particulars will also be carriers of that purity.

### **On the Second Hemistich**

*Az talkhkāmī mī-rahī dar kāmrānī mī-rawī*

In the first hemistich, all of the existential states and gnostic elaborations of this condition have been opened up and laid bare. All the semantic unfolding of the verse has been gathered into the first line. The second hemistich arrives as a kind of *glad tidings*—a declarative statement, a concise pronouncement of the outcome of a vast spiritual drama. Do you understand?

The first hemistich does not carry this summarizing quality because it is a *bashārat*—a good news. The articulation of attainment is always more condensed and direct, while the narrative of seeking and striving comes with intricacies and layering. This sequence is preserved here.

Thus, you—unlike those who wear the yoke of corporeal existence—have escaped the entire environment of despair, disillusionment, and failure. And as a result of having attained Reality within its proper realm, you are now saturated with felicity (*kāmrānī*).

And what is *kāmrānī*? It is the attainment of Reality—such an attainment that even the as-yet-unattained aspects of it become present in your state of being. That is *kāmrānī*: to have found Reality in its purity, by purifying oneself.

At this point, neither the bitterness of the realm of form nor the sweetness of the realm of form has any access to you. That is, you have elevated yourself above both the conventional conditions of success and failure. *Kāmrānī* is precisely this.

### **On *Kāmrānī***

*Kāmrānī* means to have mastery over joy—not to be overpowered by it. You understand?

In this world, when we are in grief, we are crushed by it. When we are in joy, we become intoxicated by it. But *you* dwell upon a plane of existence where even joy does not overpower you—you are master over joy.

This is one of the meanings of *kāmrānī*: mastery. Dominion. Do you follow?

Now let us render the verse in a plain, narrative register:

O you, wayfarer who has reached your destination! You have fulfilled all the rights of travel. You have explored within yourself the full truths of the journey and rendered them operative. And now your journey is one in which you are purified even from the illusion of failure, cleansed even of the very conception of inaccessibility. What you now experience is a succession of states of *attainment*—because you have succeeded in dwelling not in relation to form, but in relation to Reality. This is the meaning of the verse.

### **On the Idea of Man**

That is the meaning we have drawn from the poem. But there is another matter we must now address: we live in an age in which the human being has deviated from, and relinquished, his traditional conception of himself.

This is the first moment in human history when man is extracting the *ideal* from the *actual*—whereas in every other age, the *actual* was understood in light of the *ideal*. Such a reversal of metaphysical order has never occurred before.

Today, in the intellectual climate of this age, because man refuses to accept any final or binding idea of himself, any serious reflection upon the *idea of man* is dismissed as incoherent or meaningless. We must chart a middle course.

By this I mean: if we can preserve the imaginative validity of the concept of man—if we can sustain it as an aesthetic attraction—and simultaneously secure for it a place within the present *episteme* and *sense of being*, then we may yet find hope that the *idea of man* could eventually enter other intellectual contexts as well.

When truths fall into an atmosphere of denial, one must awaken their aesthetic allure. Perhaps their logical justification has diminished, and their epistemic validity has weakened. But however many notions man may change about himself, he cannot escape the workings of his imagination or their impact upon him.

Do you understand? That even if logic changes entirely, a connection of aesthetic continuity can still be forged between the ancient and the modern. The greatest continuity in human beings is this: to preserve truth through its aesthetic succession.

This is the duty of those who affirm the classical *idea of man*: even if they cannot render their affirmation persuasive within the changed intellectual climate, they can at least preserve its beauty. Look—this entire constellation of meanings surrounding the human being may today be considered meaningless—but it is not devoid of *attraction*, especially when articulated with grace and eloquence.

This aesthetic pull must be preserved. For if it intensifies in someone else, it may generate its own environment of intellectual acceptance.

For whenever truth and beauty are brought into conflict, beauty always prevails.

Thus, we can reconnect the present mental and affective structures with the forgotten or denied truths—on one condition: that we are able to awaken their aesthetic appeal even in those who reject them.

There are many who swoon at the poetry of Faiz Aḥmad Faiz, while the verse of Firdawsī passes over their heads. They revel in Faiz, and slumber through Firdawsī. But if asked who is the greater, they will still answer: “Firdawsī, of course.” They do not know *why* Firdawsī is greater—but his greatness has become an *article of faith* for them.

They are afraid to let their personal taste contradict that creed—because liking and disliking are not neutral acts.

Most of them rhapsodize over *Lab pe āti hai du‘ā ban ke tamannā merī* or *Shikwah*, but if you hand them *Masjid-i Qurtuba*, they will be baffled. Still, if asked, they will say: *Masjid-i Qurtuba* is far superior to *Shikwah* and *Jawāb-i Shikwah*.

We have failed to transform truth into an aesthetic axiom. We have, in fact, turned an unmakeable phrase into a meaningless cliché. We are not merely afflicted by failure—we are *committing* failure.

And now—how will we generate aesthetic force?

We no longer even understand why to prefer one color over another—whether to paint a wall yellow or blue. We argue endlessly, but neither side can justify its preference. And those who render *beauty* absurd—there are no greater criminals than these.

We are the ones who have turned beauty into nonsense.

### **On Verification and Knowledge**

*Form* must be verified externally, but *reality* is verified internally. And it is illegitimate to draw a categorical distinction between these two sources of verification.

The crime of the present age is this: it has ignorantly rejected one of these sources, and is now reaping the consequences.

The kind of *perception quoif* currently widespread—one that has disempowered both religious people and the luminaries of modernity alike—is a direct result of this error. So we say: if the *verifier* is within consciousness, it must now be made acceptable. But how? By presenting it not as a doctrine, but as a work of aesthetic imagination. That way, a path may yet open.

We live in a strange age. If you paint a masterpiece on the ceiling, no one will see it—unless it is drawn on the floor. Meaning: lowering the gaze has become a religion, and self-reflection a crime. This is an age that cannot be justified by any logic. Is this chair a *verifier*? No. The *verifier* is my mind—and yours. Even if all of you collectively declare that two plus two is five, it will still not cease to be four.

The reins of verification lie in your own hands.

It is all illusion—that some thought or idea is already “verified.”

Read, for example, the *theory of uncertainty*. Heisenberg is its *imam*. He has a book: *Physics and Philosophy*.

Read it. Heisenberg was a great man—not only a scientist but a profound writer with a deep philosophical sensibility. Read his essays. They are remarkably written. The *theory of uncertainty*, and the book *Physics and Philosophy*.

Anyone who insists on peering inward, even from a romantic perspective—anyone who insists on staying close to himself—is already resisting. For today, one is permitted to look into a mirror, but not to keep a microscope.

But without peering inward, no structure of knowledge can be formed. Knowledge is not merely the sight of things. It is the result of *two eyes*: one that looks outward, and one that looks inward. Their union produces *singular vision*. And that singular vision is what we call knowledge.

### Couplet 3

*Nī hamchu ʿaql dāna-chīm nī hamchu naḥṣ pur zi kīm*

*Nī rūḥ-i ḥaywān-i zamīn tu jān-i jānī mī-rawī*

*You are not like reason, gathering grain, nor like the self, brimmed with hate,*

*Not the earth-bound soul of beasts—you are the soul of soul, in state.*

### Introductory Reflections on the Third Couplet

Today, we turn to the third verse of the ghazal we have been studying. Let me offer a few prefatory remarks—perhaps not articulated earlier—regarding

Mawlānā's style of expression.

Mawlānā's poetry is composed squarely within the tradition of Sufi verse. Accordingly, the interpretive method appropriate to his words must be Sufi in nature. For while words in themselves, or within the surface of simple utterance, may express meanings in a neutral and autonomous fashion, there exist disciplines that act upon these general meanings—specifying them, shaping them, disciplining them.

That is, every word may possess an independent semantic field, but the meaning of a word also depends upon the tradition of expression into which it is woven. This tradition—its context and internal logic—confers upon the word its proper specification, affirmation, and refinement. Therefore, when deriving meaning from any utterance, one must begin by foregrounding the *regime of meaning* operative within that utterance. Meaning is never merely a matter of lexical autonomy; rather, the system of meaning within a given discourse determines the fixity, limitation, and particularization of interpretation, even when the words themselves appear semantically open.

Mawlānā's expression bears the imprint of a vast intellect and a vast heart. As such, it seems to engage and encompass nearly every available dimension of meaning. That is to say, when reading Rūmī, the highest levels of philosophical intellect find nourishment, while minds steeped in moral reflection also find satisfaction. In short, every methodology by which meanings may be apprehended finds living representation in his poetry.

Yet, because Mawlānā's connection to the tradition of *taṣawwuf* is not merely intellectual but experiential—indeed, both heartfelt and practiced—it follows that the speaker (*mutakallim*) in his poetry, the *voice* from which meaning emerges, must itself be treated as the primary locus of semantic authority. The speaker is the essential *substance* (*jawhar*) of meaning in his poetic world. This is a distinct matter in its own right. But the point here is that, since Mawlānā is a central representative of the Sufi tradition, any reading of his poetry must be undertaken from within a Sufi hermeneutical mode.

His mode of meaning-formation is metaphysical, Sufi, and ethical. But the *ethical* in his work is never liberal, secular, or merely cultural—it is always embedded within a metaphysical architecture. The moral vision of his poetry is one that emerges only after discovering the metaphysical reality within the human being. His ethics are the ethics of an ontologically rooted being. Thus, the analysis, appreciation, and transformation of the moral meanings in his work must remain situated within the domain of *taṣawwuf*.

If we neglect this, and attempt to burden Mawlānā's words with the expectations of some other discipline—by attempting to determine his

meanings from a framework alien to his metaphysical commitments—we will fail to grasp the necessary conditions of understanding his speech. For the rules and regulations governing poetic comprehension are distinct from those governing other forms of discourse. And in poetry, the usage of words differs significantly from their usage in other discursive registers.

### **On Meaning-Making in Poetry**

In the process of meaning-making within poetry, states (*kayfiyyāt*), emotion (*ḥiss*), and feeling (*jazba*) all participate—yet they do so in their indeterminate, non-fixed forms. For this reason, in extracting the meaning of a verse, both your intellectual capacity and your aesthetic receptivity (*dhawqī samāʿi*) are put to the test.

The poet, by nature, erases the distance between *intellect* and *taste*. It is in this sense that I say: if we attempt to understand Mawlānā while detaching him from the tradition in which he is rooted, we risk estranging ourselves from both the *meaning structure* and the *passional dimension* of the verse—those intellectual, sensory, and imaginative possibilities from which the poem draws its semantic vitality. In doing so, we effectively position ourselves as a *parallel author*—and while occupying such a position is not necessarily undesirable when reading poetry, in certain traditions it constitutes poor taste, even dishonesty.

It is in this sense that I speak: in this third verse, we encounter the words *ʿaql*, *naḥs*, *rūḥ ḥaywānī*, and *jān-i jān*—terms that, across various disciplines, function as foundational concepts. *ʿAql* is a principal term in philosophy, in logic, and in psychology. It is central to all the sciences concerned with analyzing man as a being endowed with consciousness and existence. These disciplines share these terms not marginally but centrally.

It is not the case that reason (*ʿaql*) is more prominent in philosophy and less so in, say, sociology. Wherever *ʿaql* appears as a concept, it enters as a major and defining category. The same applies to *naḥs*, *rūḥ ḥaywānī*, and *jān-i jān*.

### **On Shared Terminology Across Disciplines**

We certainly can, and perhaps should, look into other disciplines to understand these foundational terms—to draw insight from the meanings they hold in other traditions. But such meanings can serve, at most, as *building blocks* in the construction of higher Sufi significations. They cannot dictate or delimit the Sufi meanings themselves.

This point is crucial. Many, in their inexperience, hastily judge Sufi conceptions—such as the Sufi understanding of *ʿaql*—through the lens of

philosophical categories. This is unjust. It is entirely possible—indeed likely—that the Sufi interpretations of *‘aql*, *nafs*, and so forth, differ fundamentally from their definitions in philosophy or psychology.

Disciplines emerge precisely for this reason: while the *data* of the sciences may be shared, their *conclusions* diverge. This is why the diversity of disciplines arises—because the definition of a single term in one field cannot encompass all states of consciousness and all modes of existence.

Every field is entitled to maintain a distance from other fields—even a critical or dismissive distance. This is perfectly legitimate. A Sufi has every right to mock the philosopher’s concept of reason, just as the psychologist is free to laugh at the Sufi’s interpretation of the *nafs*.

All of this is acceptable in its place. However, when interpreting meaning, if we ignore the traditions in which meanings are generated and categorized—if we treat those traditions as irrelevant—we may indeed arrive at *semantic dispersion*, but we will never arrive at *intellectual crystallization*. Do you understand?

### **On the Art of Reading Poetry**

And therefore, one must learn how to read poetry. The process by which meaning emerges in poetry—the act of understanding poetry—is not limited to the immediate lexical meanings of words. In the process of meaning formation, many elements are at work: your knowledge of the words, the semantic plurality of those words, the way their meaning is shaped across various disciplines, and, crucially, the poem’s own *craft*—that is, the way the poem is constructed from words.

To interpret a poem based solely on the meanings that appear to issue directly from the words—without analyzing its *structure* and *composition*—is to commit a grave error in poetic comprehension.

In poetic meaning, many things are operative: phonetic congruence, internal verbal resonances, thematic echoes. The poem’s craft itself teaches you, persuades you, leads you—suggesting pathways through which meaning may take shape within your mind. Is this clear?

All of these factors bear upon the semantic field of the poem. This is precisely why *fixity of meaning*—semantic rigidity—in poetry is a fault.

The more a poem declares fixed meanings, the more it simultaneously reveals, through its technique, aesthetic structure, and imaginative formations, an entire world of *potential meanings*. Poetry is always a union of *actual meanings* and *possible meanings*.

### Commentary on the Fourth Couplet

Today we will read the fourth couplet of *ghazal number 2430*. Its preamble is as follows: the previous couplet had, in terms of content, encompassed both the cosmos and its outward aspect, as well as man—his outer and inner dimensions.

“*nī hamchu ‘aql dāna-chīn nī hamchu nafs pur zi kīn  
nī rūh-i ḥaywān-i zamīn tu jān-i jānī mī-rawī*”

Now, in this fourth verse, while maintaining the cosmic framework as the domain of discourse, the expression is directed toward the higher levels of the cosmos, so that a harmony between the self (*anfus*) and the world (*āfāq*) may be established. Thus, the verse reads:

“*īe chūn falak darbāfta-ī hamchū mah dartāfta-ī  
az rah nishānī yāfta dar bī-nishānī mī-rawī*”

You are like that sky upon which pearls are sewn, and like that moon which is radiant. You are, having taken a sign from the path, journeying toward signlessness—ascending toward signlessness. This is the translation of the verse.

### Explanation

As already noted previously, this human being is depicted, with respect to his essential reality (*ḥaqīqat*), as moving toward the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*). Or to put it more precisely: the human being, in accordance with his form, and more truly in accordance with his essential reality—while allowing that reality to gain absolute dominance over his form—is seen as being in motion toward the Real. This is the panoramic landscape of the entire *ghazal*.

At this stage of the journey, Rūmī recalls this ideal human being, or *insān-i kāmil*, with yet another attribute—an attribute that corresponds to the present station of his journey: that you are, in your rank, like the sky. Like that sky upon which stars have been affixed. We will open this up shortly, as this is a very beautiful image; as a simile, it is a highly refined one.

And your motion is not terrestrial motion; your movement is *celestial* (*ḥarakat-i aflākī*). Your movement is not the movement of form (*ṣūrat*); your movement is the result of reality (*ḥaqīqat*) becoming activated. That is, you have, by transcending your form through your reality, qualified yourself to walk upon the path that leads to the Real, to the attainment of the Real.

### The Traditional Meaning of the *Falak* (Heavens)

Now, *falak*—sky or heaven—has its traditional meanings, and it is necessary to understand these. That is, the heavens (*aflāk*) or the sky, traditionally, have two

dimensions of meaning—two stations.

One is the station of decree (*martabat-i taqdīr*), where, according to the ancient worldview, everything that happens in this world—every effect upon the human being—is the consequence of the revolutions of the heavens. Events on earth arise from the motion of the heavens; the circumstances of formation and corruption among human beings are generated by the movement of the celestial spheres. In this sense, the heavens are the agents of fate—that is, the implementation of fate on earth and its inhabitants takes place according to the revolutions of the sky.

There are many verses in Persian poetry that reflect this. For example, the well-known verse of Saudā which I have often recited:

“*Dunyā tamām gardish-i aflāk se banī*

*Māṭī hazār rang kī is chāk se banī*”

(The entire world was made by the turning of the heavens;

Clay of a thousand hues was formed on this potter’s wheel.)

Or the couplet by Ghālib:

“*Rāt dīn gardish meñ haiñ sātoñ āsmān*

*Ho rahegā kuchh na kuchh ghabrā’ēñ kyā?*”

(Night and day, the seven heavens revolve;

Something will surely happen—why should we worry?)

This is a common theme because it stems from a widespread belief. So, one connotation of *falak* is that it is the agent of decree.

The second connotation of *falak* is that it refers to the realm of the angelic (*‘ālam-i malakūt*), the domain of *proximity* (*qurb*) to Allah. According to the older cosmological theory, there are nine heavens. The lowest of these is called the *falak al-dunyā*—that is, the heaven whose motion governs the order of the material world. Then comes the second heaven, then the third, and so on until the ninth, which is called *falak al-a’zam* or *falak al-aṭlas*—the supreme or empyrean sphere. This is the station of divinity (*maqām al-ulūhiyya*). From the first to the ninth heaven are the ascending degrees of proximity to Allah. Each heaven is the *locality* or *realm* of a particular degree of nearness to the Divine.

### Cosmic Ascent and the Transformation of Nearness

So Rūmī is here saying that your motion was previously *kawnī*—that is, within the phenomenal world, among the forms and appearances of the cosmos. But now your motion has risen above the system of forms, above the horizontal sprawl of creation, above the terrestrial plane. It has entered into the atmosphere of divine nearness (*ḥawālah-i qurb-i Haqq*).

Previously, you fulfilled the duty of moving toward divine proximity within the *realm of remoteness* (*‘ālam-i bū‘*). Now, you are fulfilling the responsibility of *perfecting* that nearness—*within* the realm of nearness.

That is to say, the journey of the human being toward Allah, toward the Real, has now entered a *new phase*: from the known realm of remoteness into the *infinite sphere* of nearness. For the distance from Allah is not infinite—but the nearness to Allah is limitless.

The stations of distance from Allah can be counted; the degrees of divine proximity cannot. Now that you have arrived at the sure atmosphere of God’s infinite nearness, your movement is such that it travels across the *unbounded stations* of that proximity. It is a motion through the infinite.

**On: *īe chūn falak darbāfta-ī***

This simile is profoundly beautiful—it signals that your movement is now *celestial* (*aflākī*) movement. Your motion now involves *transcendence*. The simile given here—that “you are like that sky upon which pearls are embroidered,” or stars are fastened—is exceptionally meaningful and aesthetically rich. The moment a reference to the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) is introduced, beauty emerges in meaning. That is to say, it is impossible for meanings or spiritual recognitions (*ma‘ānī wa ma‘ārif*) acquired through relation to the Real to be devoid of the highest degree of beauty.

This itself is a lesson. And similarly, there is another principle here: that progress in nearness to Allah entails certain necessary *aesthetic consequences*. That is, the one who draws near to Allah (*muqarrab ilā’Llāh*) simultaneously grows in his capacity for *aesthetic satisfaction* and *refinement*. For appreciation of divine proximity is not possible without the satisfaction of the aesthetic faculty. One cannot attain proximity to Allah without awakening the aesthetic channel within oneself.

From this, another dimension of meaning enters: that the stations of nearness to Allah are of different kinds, and they follow two overarching principles—first, nearness to Allah through His *beauty* (*jamāl*), and second, nearness through His *majesty* (*jalāl*). In the path toward divine nearness, the reference to majesty usually comes first, and the reference to beauty later. But in your case, since you are maintaining your movement toward Allah within the *realm of nearness*, the beginning of that nearness is now arising through the attraction of the Divine *beauty* (*jamāl al-Ḥaqq*).

So the point is now established: that the Real, in the state of nearness, exerts a *aesthetic influence* at both the cognitive and the affective levels—and you have absorbed that influence into yourself at the highest degree of realization. In this context, *falak* signifies the station of perfection (*daraja kamāl*); it is a

symbol of perfection. The celestial sphere (*falak*) is moving upon the path of beauty—having become a manifestation (*mazhar*) of the beauty of Allah. That is, the simile here of “a sky adorned with stars” indicates that you are now a living, active *manifestation of divine beauty*.

This is a remarkable truth: that to reach a station, one must *become* it. Until one establishes an *ontological correspondence* between the achievements of one’s journey and one’s being, the journey does not become entirely true or wholly consequential. Thus, the true traveller in the degrees of beauty is one who himself becomes a *manifestation* of that beauty. That is what *falak darbāfta* expresses.

As Mawlānā says in the *Mathnawī*, giving final word to this theme—so complete a word that no addition is conceivable:

“*Pas qiyāmat shū qiyāmat rā bibīn*

*Didan-i har chīz rā shart ast īn*”

*(Become the Resurrection, and then you will behold the Resurrection.*

*The condition for seeing anything is: become that thing.)*

So, *falak darbāfta* is now clear: these are the varied *manifestations of the beauty of Allah* (*zūhūr-i jamāl*), different forms through which divine beauty appears. And those forms have now become *imprinted* upon your very being.

### **On: *e hamchu mah dartāfta***

The summary of the aesthetics of the heavens (*jamālāt-i falak*) is the moon (*mah*). The moon is the distilled essence of the sky’s beauty. So, from the general to the specific, the poet now says: you are not only the sky, you are also the moon that gives it its most brilliant ornamentation. You are not only the bearer of stars; you are the bright moon by whose light the stars themselves glisten.

The moon is also a *manifestation of divine beauty*—but unlike the stars, it is a *direct* manifestation. Simply understand this: the *manifestations of the Divine beauty* are of two kinds—those that are indirect (*bi’l-wāsiṭa*), and those that are direct (*bi-lā wāsiṭa*). The stars are indirect manifestations of beauty; the moon is a direct one.

Thus, you carry both modalities within you: the state of *indirect manifestation* is present in you, and the station of *direct manifestation* has also been granted to you. In this way, fulfilling both conditions of becoming a manifestation of divine beauty, you are moving toward the reality of beauty (*ḥaqīqat-i jamāl*).

That is, in the realm of divine nearness, the prerequisite for journeying is this: become a manifestation of that which you seek to approach. The more

one succeeds in becoming a manifestation of beauty, the more one acquires *provisions* (*zād-i safar*) for the journey.

Do you see?

**On: az rah nishānī yāfta dar bī-nishānī mī-rawī**

The phrase *az rah nishānī yāfta* can be read in two ways:

- i. *az rah nishāne yāfta* (“you found a sign along the path”),
- ii. *az rah nishānī yāfta* (“you found a trace from the path”).

The difference in meaning is subtle. In the first, “*nishāne*” implies a *specific sign*, or perhaps even a *great sign* (*āyah kubrā*) that you have found. In the second, it conveys the sense that the path you are traversing is marked by the traces of the One to whom it leads. In both readings, the fundamental meaning remains intact.

You are now on a journey where you are *passing through the manifestations of outward beauty* in order to arrive at *inward beauty*. Your goal is not hidden from you. You are progressing *in the presence* of your goal, continuing to ascend within its nearness. And since this is *movement in proximity* (*ḥarakat fī'l-qurb*), it is a motion that occurs *in the state of presence* (*ḥālat-i ḥudūr*). But proximity to the Real does not negate the condition of veiling (*ghayba*); for if, in the very moment of presence, veiling is no longer remembered, then the next station of that presence becomes meaningless, and no ascent is possible within it.

It is *ghayb*—the sense of absence—that allows *one presence* to be transformed into *another, higher presence*. Thus, you are walking upon the earth of presence beneath the sky of veiling.

**On bī-nishānī (Signlessness)**

You understand *bī-nishānī*, don't you? *Bī-nishānī* refers to transcendence (*tanzīh*), to the realm of the Divine Essence (*ʿālam al-dhāt*)—where there is absolutely nothing like Allah, and no manifestation whatsoever that could serve as a visible referent by which one might say, “I have seen God.” It is that domain where neither reason (*ʿaql*) nor imagination (*wahm*) can reach, where no “other” may enter. This is the realm of the Essence. So, if we speak in the terminology of Sufism, then this means: *you are journeying from the realm of similitude (tashbīh) toward the domain of transcendence (tanzīh)*. This is the full meaning of the verse. That is one essential point.

To summarize: you are journeying toward darkness while seeing; a movement that crosses the limits of sight with the best of vision. That is the essence of this verse. And this is the rank of that one whom Allah has granted the *tawfīq* to become among the *muqarrabīn*—those brought near—such that

Allah provides him with *vehicles of similitude* (*markabāt-i tashbīh*) by which he may traverse the *stations of transcendence* (*manāzil-i tanzīh*).

You already understand what *tashbīh* and *tanzīh* are. The core theme of this passage, then, is the harmonization of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*—linking the world of forms and comparisons with the world of negation and essence.

### Next Couplet

ای غرقه سودای او ای بیخود از صهبای او  
از مدرسه اسمای او اندر معانی می روی

Now look at the astonishing order in this verse—one that leaves the intellect in awe. This verse shows how *tashbīh* is diminishing and *tanzīh* is intensifying. That is, in this very next verse, the movement is further elevated.

*e gharqa-yi sawdā-yi ū* — O you who are drowned in passion for Him.  
*e bī-khud az ṣahbā-yi ū* — O you who are beside yourself from His wine.  
*az madrasah-yi asmā<sup>2</sup>-yi ū* — here the *idāfa* (genitive construction) has been elided; it is actually *madrasah-i asmā<sup>2</sup>-i ū*, “the school of His Names.” If the full genitive were spoken aloud, the verse would become metrically heavy—so Rūmī often omits the *idāfa* particle.

So: O you, graduate of the school of His Names, *andar ma‘ānī mī-rawī*—you are journeying through meanings and realities.

Now observe: *ma‘ānī* are the opposite of *ṣūrat* (form). *Tashbīh* is grounded in *form*; form is rooted in *tashbīh*. Here, Rūmī is showing that form is weakening, or rather, that *tashbīh* is being overcome. You are now moving from the *divine foundation of forms* to the *divine foundation of realities*—that is, advancing further toward *tanzīh*.

### Key Terms Requiring Elucidation

There are several terms in this verse that must be clarified in order to grasp its meaning:

- *sawdā*
- *bī-khud*
- *ṣahbā-yi ū*
- *madrasah-i asmā<sup>2</sup>*
- *ma‘ānī*

Nearly all of these deserve detailed commentary.

### On *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> (Passionate Madness)

The term *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> refers to that kind of *‘ishq* (love) that exerts sovereignty even over the intellect. You understand, don't you, that *‘ishq* which establishes dominion over the mind is what is called *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

Another meaning of *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> is: to see none but the beloved, to admit no other desire into the heart besides the object of love. It denotes an *amorous single-mindedness* in which passion reigns over the intellect, and this singleness is total and all-inclusive. That is, the lover gazes at the beloved with eyes so open that those same eyes remain shut to all else. The very eye open to the beloved is now closed to all others. This is *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

A third, more subtle meaning derives from the etymological root shared by *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> and *sawād*, both associated with *blackness*. Blackness is the color of the unseen (*ghayb*). By that association, *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> signifies: to make the attraction toward the unseen Beloved the only *condition* of one's being, and the only *goal* of one's consciousness—to feel the pull of the absent Beloved as the sole mood of existence, and to remain permanently under its sovereignty. This is *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

A fourth meaning: *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> is that desire for the Beloved which so overpowers the seeker (*tālib*) that he no longer remains in possession of himself. The dominance of the desired (*maḥlūb*) is such that the seeker ceases to dwell within his own awareness. The Beloved alone is felt; the longing for the Beloved is the only capital of sensation. The lover lacks even the capacity to sense the Beloved directly—this is *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

A fifth meaning: *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> is an unmediated relation with the Beloved—one that is free of any internal or external intermediary. What does it mean for this relation to be unmediated? That love never turns into a *desire*. It neither generates the hope of union (*wiṣāl*), nor does it grieve in separation (*firāq*). That is, one does not relate to the Beloved in terms of longing for union or grieving over absence. Those two—union and separation—are the default mediators in love. But *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> elevates the Beloved above both, and produces a relation that persists in absolute focus. Clear enough?

### More Dimensions of *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>

In simpler terms, *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> is madness—a condition that neither the intellect can grasp nor the will can restrain. When *‘ishq* bursts the limits of reason and escapes the control of intention, it becomes *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>. Its final and fullest meaning is this: *when love becomes the shared and singular condition of both consciousness and existence*, when love for the Beloved becomes the only reality in both awareness and being—that state is called *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>. May Allah grant it to us.

Another shade of meaning: in ordinary, non-amorous life, viewed from

the rational perspective, consciousness dominates over being. But in love, it is *being* that should dominate *consciousness*. The fulfillment of this demand of love is realized in *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>—where love, as an ontological reality, becomes sovereign. The Beloved’s presence becomes a state of *existential presence*. This is *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

Yet another dimension: the human faculties of reason, will, and sense are constitutionally insufficient (*nā-rasa*) when it comes to fulfilling the proper etiquette in one’s relation with the Beloved, or for ascending the stations of proximity. Reason may be capable of conceiving the Beloved, but it is not capable of reaching Him. The will may sense the desired, but cannot encompass it. *Sawdā*<sup>2</sup>—or love—*remedies this intrinsic insufficiency*. It completes the reason, empowers the will to union, and shrinks the cognitive distance between lover and Beloved.

Another shade still: *to remain content with the absence of the Beloved, and to accept that absence, while continually receiving from it successive states of presence*. *Sawdā*<sup>2</sup> is the love that does not *interrupt* the Beloved’s absence, yet refuses to let Him remain absent. All of these are shades of *sawdā*<sup>2</sup>. One may say: *when love gains complete dominance; when love becomes the sole condition of my being and knowing—then that is what is called sawdā*<sup>2</sup>.

### [Interjection: A Question on the Role of Consciousness]

Question: What is the role of *consciousness* in all this?

Answer: This mind, too, is being kept singularly oriented toward Allah—it is not being allowed to entertain thoughts that run counter to that orientation. Otherwise, consciousness produces contradiction within every thought. This *dialectical nature* of consciousness—this is what is suspended, nullified.

O you who are immersed in love—indeed, let us say, submerged in *perfect love*—you who have dived into it with such intensity that not even a single instant of hesitation interrupts your immersion. The one who does not remain on the shore of the ocean of love but resides in its depths, whose very atmosphere of being is defined by *dwelling in the depths* of this ocean of love.

### On: *bī-khud az šahbā-yi ū*

Let us now unpack *bī-khud*—“beside oneself from His wine.” This phrase is closely linked to *sawdā*<sup>2</sup> and should be treated in connection with it. In fact, when we examine the verbal and lexical connections across this couplet, this relationship will become clearer. But even now, let us attempt to explain *bī-khud* within its immediate conceptual domain.

The common, everyday understanding of *bī-khud* is simply this: one who

has no awareness of oneself—one who has lost all sense of self, no longer possesses self-perception, or even the capacity to conceptualize oneself. That is the superficial meaning.

But the more precise, *intentional* sense of the word *bī-khud*, as it is being used here, is as follows: a being whose inner content is not its own self. To use our own terminology: *bī-khud* is the person whose container is filled not with the self, but with Allah. One whose very *being* is no longer founded upon *ego* (*anā*), but rather upon the presence of Allah. Not only in terms of being, but also in consciousness—that is, he is *empty of himself* in both existence and awareness.

Such a person harbors no awareness of the self in the realm of states (*aḥwāl*), and carries no conception of the self in the realm of mind. One may say he has removed himself entirely from both the provinces of mind and heart—he has ejected the self from both domains of existence and consciousness.

Now, bear in mind: there is a necessary interdependence between *existence* (*wujūd*) and *selfhood* (*anā*); nothing can exist without some form of recognition or identity. But the very moment Allah becomes the referent, this interdependence is shattered. No longer does one's existence derive from selfhood. The basis of being is now divine-ness, not ego.

So “*bī-khud az ṣahbā-yi ū*”—the basic translation is, “you are intoxicated by His wine,” or “rendered unconscious by His wine.” But these words here are not mere literary flourishes—they function as technical terms. We must, therefore, unpack *bī-khud* as a Sufi term:

In its simplest definition: one who no longer inhabits their self-perception or self-thought is *bī-khud*. That is, someone who, in the condition of being, no longer appears to himself—his own involvement in his existence is no longer felt. Such a one dwells on a plane of being that requires no presence of ego. One who resides on such a plane is *bī-khud*—one who has surpassed the confines of selfhood without abandoning existence.

Another layer of meaning: *bī-khud* is one whose existential velocity surpasses the speed of his ego. That is, one whose being flows so swiftly that, at each stage, he is forced to abandon his previous self and adopt a new self. This is what the Sufis refer to as *takmil al-wujūd*—the completion of being: that I become a bearer of such existential flow that, at every step, I must transcend my given selfhood. My ability to harmonize with the flow of being depends entirely upon my capacity to abandon the insistence upon self. As long as I insist on maintaining the ego, I cannot remain in synchrony with being's movement. But the moment I lift off the shackles of *anā*, I become qualified, capable, and worthy of joining that stream of being.

So, in contrast to other perspectives, within the Sufi view, *ego is not an aid to existence but an obstacle*. The one who has discovered that ego obstructs the path to being has, in essence, restored the original architecture of existence. He has attained the awareness of his relation to the True Being (*al-marwīd al-ḥaqq*), and has gained the strength to act according to the demands of that relation.

The first *adab* in relation to the True Being is this: do not allow ego to become the marker of your existence. This is what it means to be *bī-khud*.

And secondly, know that you are journeying toward One who is free of all limitation and condition. Just as earlier, we saw that your goal was Beauty (*jamāl*), and that you traveled toward that Beauty by becoming its *mazhar* (manifestation), now, your goal is the Divine Essence (*dhāt*)—free of every form of delimitation. And this infinite transcendence has now been reflected onto you: you too have shed the conventional and familiar forms of being—you have escaped the prison of ego (*anā*).

Now, the principle becomes clear: for Allah, ego transcends existence—that is, in His essential station (*martabat al-dhāt*), Allah is beyond all existence. Whereas for the servant, ego is inferior to existence. In order for the servant's existence to be authenticated, he must transcend ego. Conversely, Allah maintains His absolute, pure *Selfhood* precisely by being beyond existence.

So the *kalima* for Allah is: *He is the I that transcends existence*. And the *kalima* for us is: *We are being that must transcend ego*.

And thus: to the extent that we succeed in rising above the ego, to that extent is our *existence authentic*. You see now, don't you?

So what Rūmī is saying is: *you have attained the authenticity of being through His wine*. That is, through the effect of His *ṣahbā*, you have found the path to perfected existence.

### **On the Necessity of Divine Attraction (*jadhba*)**

There is one more point to add. If man is left to his own devices, he can never escape the cage of ego. The mind is structured in such a way that it is accustomed to understanding the entire order of being, all its realities, upon the principle of *anā*. Therefore, in order to rise above the ego and attain a higher, nobler state of existence, one needs an external pull. Man cannot generate the power from within himself to escape ego's limits.

By *external* here we mean: divine attraction (*jadhba ilāhiyya*). It is only this divine pull—the pull of the Real (*jadhba al-Ḥaqq*)—that can draw us out of our temporary ego and its narrow confines. I cannot exit the self *by myself*. That is what *ṣahbā-yi ū* alludes to: that Allah's pull—His wine—chose you as its rightful recipient. You became its target. The result was: you emerged beyond

your self, you rose above it.

You see now, don't you?

The perfection of *maʿrifā* is to acknowledge Allah as transcending being. And the culmination of human consciousness is to perceive one's own existence as superior to one's selfhood—indeed, to realize it. This entire existential excellence is something bestowed upon you through the *pull* of Allah.

And since this *bī-khudī*—this loss of self—was achieved through the wine of nearness (*ṣahbā-yi qurb*), it bears no risk of lapse or fall. I will open the meaning of *ṣahbā* shortly, and it will become even clearer, *in shāʿ Allāh*.

You have understood now what it means to be *bī-khud*—that you are journeying toward your *maḥlūb* and *maqṣūd* (your object of yearning and your final purpose) by relinquishing your self at every step. At each stage, you must abandon a former self and embrace a new one. Eventually, a moment arrives when the former self is left behind and no new self is required. This is the meaning of *bī-khud az ṣahbā-yi ū*.

### On *ṣahbā*

The third term requiring elucidation is *ṣahbā*. In general usage, the word refers to *wine*; in particular, it denotes the most refined class of wine—specifically, red wine—regarded as the most potent, intense, and intoxicating of all. Ghalib expresses this beautifully in a line:

ہاتھ دھو دل سے یہی گرمی گر اندیشے میں ہے  
آبگینہ تندی صہبا سے پگھلا جائے ہے

“Wash your hands of your heart, if such is the heat of your worries  
Even crystal melts from the ferocity of *ṣahbā*.”

Now, as to what *ṣahbā* signifies here—we will come to its particular meaning in a moment, but let us first understand it through its general connotation: *wine*. In Sufī and spiritual terminology, *wine* is a metaphor for inspiration (*ilhām*)—specifically, the condition of being inspired by the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*). It is *ṣahbā* that renders the servant receptive to divine inspiration.

Second, wine is the means by which *experiences beyond the senses* are tasted. Wine transforms proximity (*qurb*) from a concept into an experience. As Ḥāfiz says:

*We have beheld the reflection of the Beloved's face in the goblet—  
O heedless one, you know nothing of the ecstasy of our eternal draught.*

That is, in the goblet, we perceive not wine but the image of the Friend. Our intoxication is not with the drink but with the presence of the Beloved.

Wine, in this spiritual sense, is not simply perception in nearness, but *states* experienced in nearness.

Because the proximity you enjoy with Allah is a divinely initiated event, Allah has granted you a perpetual state of being *inspired* by Him. What, then, is *existence* (*wujūd*)? It is nothing but a condition of sustained inspiration from Allah. Any existent being that does not bear this divine inspiration in a living and operative form is, in truth, non-existent.

My being and your being—these are merely differentiated articulations of a single *state*: the state of presence with Allah, of being touched and moved by His descent. As much as we continue to be inspired by Him, to that degree we elevate the meaning, authenticity, and height of our own being.

Do you not see how wine disrupts all the structures of ordinary awareness and selfhood? It renders reason inoperative, suspends will, and undoes all conditions of self-identity. It *undoes* us from within. And this, precisely, is the etiquette of being: that all the foundations, conditions, and aims of your existence should arise from your relation with Allah—should be sourced in your connection to Him.

So *ṣahbā*, in this context, refers to: a specific state of proximity to Allah; a special, divinely bestowed *taḥfīq* that generates such a state. It is by this *ṣahbā* that He has placed you in His presence and equipped you to ascend through its infinite degrees.

### **Synthesis of the Two Hemistichs**

Now, if we combine the two hemistichs of the couplet:

- The first hemistich affirms that your *existence* is *authentic*—by virtue of your relation to Allah.
- The second hemistich affirms that your *consciousness* is *true*—again, in virtue of that same divine relation.

The human intellect is corrupted because it views the world through the lens of ego (*anā*). That corruption is healed only when one begins to view oneself and all things through the lens of divine relation. That healing, that purification, has occurred within you: the defect of your existence has been removed through His *ṣahbā*, and the disorder of your consciousness has been corrected through the truths (*maʿārif*) imparted by Him.

*az madrasat asmā<sup>2</sup>-yi ū andar maʿānī mī-ravī*

Your entire education, your entire spiritual formation, has occurred in the Presence of Allah. You have been instructed in the realities embedded within His Names. Is there any answer to this? That your formation came through

the Divine *zuhūr* (manifestation), and your learning through divine *ḥaqāʾiq* (realities).

Here, *madrāsāt asmāʾ*<sup>2</sup> alludes—*talmīḥan*—to the Qurʾānic episode in which Allah taught Ādam, upon him peace, the Names and then asked him to present that knowledge. That was the *madrāsāt al-asmāʾ*<sup>2</sup>, whose *mudarris* was Allah Himself, and whose first reciter of the lesson was Ādam.

What is being said here is: you, too, were a most enviable student in that school of the Divine Names. And it follows, quite obviously, that one who has received such instruction from Allah will travel among realities—not be confined to appearances. Because He who taught you form and its meaning is Allah, and Allah’s teaching can never be partial or deficient.

So: the *wine* that Allah offered made you complete in your existential state; the *knowledge* He granted perfected your consciousness. You now traverse realities while dwelling among forms.

### **On the Nature of Names (*asmāʾ*) and Realities (*maʿānī*)**

An *ism* is a *form accompanied by reality*. An *ism* is the form that encloses a *dhāt* (essence). And there is a kind of form that is so essential, so fundamental, that every reality must be held within it—if removed from this essential form, that reality loses its ontological integrity.

In the knowledge of Allah, form and reality are not divided. That division exists only from the standpoint of human knowing. Allah’s instruction to you—the *ʿilm al-asmāʾ*<sup>2</sup>—enabled you to reach the identity and *ʿayniyya* (essential unity) of form and reality. And because of this exalted station, you now experience realities *while still within forms*.

You understand now: in order for truths to retain existence, they must retain their essential forms. If severed from their appropriate forms, they no longer *exist* in any valid sense.

The *ism* is that designation of the *dhāt* which acts as its representative. To relate to an *ism* is, in fact, to relate to the *dhāt* itself. So in this couplet, the *asmāʾ*<sup>2</sup> can be understood to signify all existents—all beings and their manifestations. Allah has granted you full knowledge of these beings and their signs. And His granting, by its very nature, cannot be deficient or partial.

He has made clear to you the meaning of existence and its designations. He has led you, under His own guidance, to that stage where *form and essence* become one. Your consciousness is now single-pointed in its focus upon Him, and as it journeys, it unites each form it encounters with the reality it expresses.

You are now among the knowers of the *asmāʾ*<sup>2</sup>—those who preserve the link between *form* and *reality*.

### Concluding Synthesis of the Fifth Couplet

Thus, *ma'ānī* here refers to *ḥaqāʾiq*—not simply mental abstractions, but actual ontological realities.

Since the *manifestations of divine nearness* are themselves forms, and you, journeying through those manifestations, have managed to remain attached to their origin—you now pass beyond those forms while keeping them rooted in the Essence (*dhāt*). You attribute the manifestations of Beauty to the One Truly Beautiful (*dhū'l-jamāl*), and you ascend through ever-new stations of divine nearness.

The conclusion of this couplet, then, is this: You are complete *both* as a lover (*ʿāshiq*) and as a knower (*ʿārif*). The first hemistich embodies the perfection of love; the second, the perfection of gnosis. In you, the *ʿāshiq* and the *ʿārif* have become fully integrated, fused into a single perfected point of being.

O you—upon whom even the *absence* (*ghiyāb*) of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) exerts a compelling pull; you for whom the *hiddenness* of the Real itself becomes a source of spiritual states—

O you—for whom the *manifestation* of the Real is likewise a repository of experiential disclosure—

O you—who has tasted both the *experience of His absence* and the *experience of His presence*—

You are proceeding, having acquired from the Real the means to complete your consciousness, and equipped now to journey through the truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of the Real.

That is: from the Real, the existential demands (*taqāḍiyāt wujūdiyya*) have already been fulfilled in you, and from the Real, the cognitive imperatives of nearness (*maṭālib shuʿrīyya*) have also found full realization within you.

Couplet:

*shab kārvān'hā zīm jahān bar mī-rawād tā āsmān*  
*tu khud ba tanhā'ī-ye khud ṣad kārvānī mī-rawī*

**Translation**

*Tonight, countless caravans are departing from this world, ascending toward the heavens.*

*And you—entirely immersed in your solitude—are yourself a hundred caravans on the move.*

## Meaning

This verse declares that tonight innumerable caravans are rising from the terrestrial realm toward the celestial sphere. As night descends, a movement toward the heavens commences. Two types of voyagers are indicated here: one is *you*, the solitary traveller; the other is *the entire cosmos*, all beings collectively in motion. Thus, two travellers are on a shared journey toward a common destination, though by distinct paths. This duality of path becomes evident upon deeper reflection.

*You*, in the fullness of your solitude, enveloped within your own interiority, cast entirely in the mold of your singularity—you, in that solitary selfhood, are equivalent in stature and worth to a hundred caravans. And in that singular capacity, you ascend toward the celestial realm. It is not that multitudes may become one individual; rather, it is the individual—fully realized—who embodies the spiritual rank of multitudes.

## Human Being and the Cosmos

Who, then, is the individual? What is the *idea of man*? He is the being whose inner content encompasses the entire cosmos—while also surpassing it. The cosmos is merely the unfolding and elaboration of what lies already implicit in man. It expends itself fully within him, but he himself transcends it. Man is the one in whom the cosmos is contained, but he exceeds what it contains.

## Thematic Note

This verse articulates a foundational concept of the Sufi metaphysical tradition: *ḥaqīqat-i jāmiʿa insāniyya*—the Universal Human Reality. A full understanding of the verse requires a careful exposition of this idea, including its ontological structure and hierarchical unfolding. The speaker expresses that unless that metaphysical context is made explicit, any explanation of the verse will remain inadequate. Once the framework of *ḥaqīqat-i jāmiʿa* is elaborated, the meaning of the verse will become self-evident.

## Essential Distinction

Man is the locus of manifestation (*mazhar*) of even those divine attributes which lie *beyond* the domain of disclosure (*zuhūr*). The cosmos, in contrast, is the sum of the manifestations of the attributes that belong solely to the order of visibility. Thus, when man becomes the vessel of his own reality and activates that reality from within, he alone is able to traverse the infinitely layered nearness to Allah. The cosmic journey is constrained by necessity; man's journey, however, is marked by choice and consciousness.

The entire structure of being rests upon movement toward the Real. But

only the human being possesses the capacity to journey beyond the domain of manifest attributes to the very essence (*dhāt*) of the Divine. The cosmos comes to rest at the threshold of attributes; man, by contrast, is granted the ontological and cognitive capacity to take the essence of the Real as both his actual objective and his present object of desire.

The cosmos is driven by compulsion; man journeys through will and through gnosis. Any ontological state that is accessible to consciousness must necessarily be shared between existence and awareness—and wherever such sharing occurs, human volition is thereby implied. This, the speaker says, is a matter for detailed inquiry in a later exposition.

### **Aesthetic Dimensions of the Verse:**

For now, we dwell along the aesthetic margins of the verse, deferring a full ontological descent for later.

### **The Night (*shab*):**

- i. *shab* here functions as a symbol and metaphor. Night is that hour when the entire order of illumination becomes celestial. It is the condition in which light resides only in the sky. Since to *be* is to be related to light, night marks a return to heavenly radiance. When darkness covers the earth, the beings of earth turn their gaze to the heavens, seeking to re-establish their ontological relation to that supernal light. This is not an incidental poetic image—rather, it is foundational to the phrase *mī-ravad tā āsmān* (ascending toward the sky).
- ii. *shab* is also the time of concealment—a milieu of *khafāʾ*? (hiddenness). Its origin is darkness, and this darkness is neutral in nature: it may be interpreted as a veil of heedlessness, or as a depth of mystical interiority. It is a neutral zone. Day (*nahār*) is the realm of manifestation—requiring no movement to reach. Night, by contrast, is the condition in which one must journey in order to arrive at disclosure. Day is the *condition* of manifestation; night is the *quest* for it. And so the one who seeks manifestation is greater than the one who merely dwells in it. The ontological value of night thus lies in its capacity to awaken longing, to stir the heart toward that which lies beyond the visible.
- iii. *shab* also alludes—via spiritual genealogy—to the *Laylat al-Miʿrāj*, the Night of Ascension. This night is the spiritual lineage of this verse. Just as the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace, taught us how to maintain a rootedness in the earth *and* how to cultivate a celestial bond—just as he delivered to us the Real in both His visible and hidden modalities—so too does this night carry the imprint of that

same archetype. It is the night of ascension, the night of wakefulness lived in the spirit of the Mi'rāj.

### On *kārvān'hā* (Caravans)

Though the word *kārvān'hā* may not carry significant semantic subtlety on its own, when imagined visually, it evokes a beauty of such magnitude that it verges on the unbearable—an aesthetic so profound that it exceeds the grasp of the intellect. This is true beauty: the kind that elevates vision beyond the intellect, such that the eye, normally overshadowed by the mind, is here rendered its teacher.

Beauty alone relieves the eye of its inferiority complex before the intellect. Try to picture it: the entire cosmos, in all its varieties and manifold modes of existence, forming processions and caravans, moving together in unison toward a transcendent destination. Day keeps the movement of existence on a horizontal plane. But night arrives to reorient that movement vertically—heavenward.

In this upward movement, if the cosmos is divided into ontological categories or levels of being, then each category—each genus and species of existence—organizes itself into a unified procession and moves with utter concentration and synchronicity toward its celestial origin. This is the night that teaches form to return to essence; that instructs appearance in the ascent toward reality.

Thus, in the first hemistich, night is the *system* of ascent. In the second hemistich, it becomes the *locale*—the spatial register of ascent—for the realized human being. The line *tu khud ba tanhā'ī-ye khud šad kārvānī mī-ravī* expresses that this individual, in the solitude of his own selfhood, becomes the place of ascent. So night serves a dual role: it is both the metaphysical order of elevation for the world, and the arena in which that elevation is actualized by the perfected human.

What is night? It is the moment when the distance between heaven and earth vanishes. Day reveals that distance; night conceals it. Now consider *kārvān'hā*: imagine all the trees of the universe forming one caravan; all the rivers forming another; all the animals yet another. The entire cosmos, according to its formal ontological categories, unites itself in cohesive, organized convoys and moves in harmony toward its celestial destination.

Reflect for a moment: the whole of creation has entered into a state of flight. And the intellect cannot fully comprehend the implications of this cosmic ascent. It is the image—the imaginative vision of this scene—that enables the eye to behold what the mind cannot grasp. Whenever seeing becomes more significant than understanding, that is the *situation* of beauty.

That is the *situation* of the Real. For *ḥaqq* and *jamāl* both generate states in which vision transcends cognition and becomes the primary mode of insight.

**On *tu khud ba tanhāʾī-ye khud***

تو خود به تنهایی خود صد کاروانی می روی

The phrase *tu khud ba tanhāʾī-ye khud* is a summit of poetic craft. Its very sound is resonant and beautiful, and its syntactic construction is likewise elegant and profound. The repetition of the word *khud* (self) is no mere stylistic embellishment—it represents two distinct levels of *selfhood*. The first *khud* signifies the *functional self*, while the second signifies the *ideal or real self* (*al-naḥs al-ḥaqīqīyya*). In other words, this line articulates a state in which one’s actuality and one’s ontological reality have become one.

And who is the human being, if not the creature whose defining possibility—and obligation—is precisely this: to reconcile and unify their functional existence with their essential reality? That is why the repetition occurs: the first *khud* names the actual self, the self in the world; the second names the ideal self, the self in its ultimate reality. One could express it otherwise by saying that the first *khud* is the self as earthly existence, while the second is the self as celestial essence.

The gap between heaven and earth is not bridged in the external cosmos (*āfāq*) but within the soul (*anfus*). Night merely conceals the distance between heaven and earth; the human being alone possesses the capacity to dissolve that distance altogether—by absorbing the cosmos into the self. And when the cosmos is absorbed into the self, it relinquishes its plurality. Thus, the container of *ontological unity* is not outside us; it is within us.

Put differently, the multiplicity of the cosmos seeks unity, and it finds that unity only when it enters the domain of human perception. It is the human being who receives the universe into himself, and in so doing, absorbs its plurality into a higher unity—the very unity which he has realized within himself by actualizing his ideal.

This is that perfected human being whose solitude is not a state of isolation but a mode of *primordial unity*. His individuality, his inner intensities, his very separateness have been so utterly unified that they have dissolved the multiplicity of the cosmos into that same unity—into the ideal he has rendered functional, the reality he has actualized.

**On *ṣad kārwānī mī-rawī* (“you go as a hundred caravans”)**

The phrase *ṣad kārwānī* allows for two possible readings. In one, the terminal *-ī* is interpreted as a pronominal suffix—meaning *you are*—so that the

phrase means, “you are a hundred caravans.” In the second reading, the *-ī* is understood in a simile-based construction—thus, “you are like a hundred caravans,” or, “you proceed as would a hundred caravans.” In either case, the implication is profound: you are, in your singular being, equal to the movement, form, and presence of a multitude. When you are seen as a subject, you yourself are a hundred caravans; and when the concept of *caravan* is derived from the collective activity of the cosmos, you are said to travel as they do—mirroring their multiplicity within your singularity. In this compact phrase, both resemblance (*mushābaha*) and identity (*‘aynīya*) are simultaneously affirmed, as well as otherness and distinction (*mughāyara*, *ghayriyya*). This is the eloquent power and layered capacity of this expression.

You are, therefore, the real and true version of the caravans that fill the cosmos—the cosmos is but a contingent and symbolic version of the same. You are a container for both the cosmic caravans (*afāqī*) and the inward caravans (*nafsi*). These two realms—cosmic and psychospiritual—are fully encompassed within you in such a manner that your transcendence over both becomes manifest.

According to the metaphysical lexicon we are familiar with: everything is in a journey toward Allah. For *wujūd* (being) is defined by a twofold movement—creation (*takhlīq*) and return (*rujū‘*). The movement *from* Allah constitutes the reality of creation; the movement *to* Allah constitutes the reality of perfection and completion. Every existent being, every ontological form or situation, partakes of these two motions. Everything has been created by Allah; and everything, once created, is oriented toward returning to Him. So existence is always caught within these two dimensions: a movement from Allah (creative origination) and a movement toward Allah (perfectional return). Space and time exist only as containers for this dual motion—and as the means through which creation can be taught how to transcend those very containers. The second movement, from form back to essence, is the true and final journey of being.

The cosmos, too, is bound by this structure, though it moves without consciousness. There is, indeed, a type of perfection that occurs in existence without self-awareness, and another type of perfection that occurs *with* it. The cosmos moves in this axis of return, but involuntarily, without choice. Its motion is embedded within it. It cannot help but turn upward. But you—O human—though subject to the same created order, are unique in that *in the domain of command* (*‘ālam al-amr*) you have choice, even if in the created order (*‘ālam al-khalq*) you are compelled. The cosmos is compelled in both creation and command; you are only compelled in creation. In the command, you are free.

And so the verse depicts a magnificent scene: all of creation, like birds of varying kinds, is lifting its wings and turning toward the sky. This entire upward motion is a manifestation of cosmic longing. Yet when one sees *you*, the astonishment born of this scene is transformed—because you are not merely compelled like the rest. You are moving toward the heavens with full agency, and your destination is beyond even that of the compelled cosmic motion. Not only that, but your *speed* of ascent surpasses it. You are the one for whom ascent is not only a necessity of being, but an act of *volition* and *conscious striving*. The cosmos must rise; you choose to rise. And in that choice lies the entire difference.

Now observe another subtle point: the phrase *tā āsamān* (“up to the heavens”) pertains to the first hemistich only—that is, the destination of the cosmic caravans is *up to* the heavens. As soon as night descends, the entire cosmos takes flight toward the heavens. That is its limit. However, your journey extends beyond even that. For the caravans of creation, the heavens constitute a final destination; for you, they are but a waystation. They are not the end of your ascent.

Recall that, in traditional cosmology, the heavens were regarded as the agents of destiny. The celestial spheres were seen as instruments through which divine decrees unfolded. Therefore, any being for whom the heavens are the *final goal* is by definition a being of compulsion—one whose ascent is subject to the deterministic motions of the *falak* (sphere), to the revolutions of fate. The heavens are the highest point such a being can attain. But you are of a different order. Your path does not terminate at the heavens. Because the cosmos is bound to the heavens by necessity, it cannot transcend them. But you, who journey by volition and consciousness, are destined to surpass them.

There are many further insights that can be drawn from this verse. But for now, we have accomplished a detailed poetic and technical analysis of its structure and implications. Nevertheless, this verse ultimately demands that it be read and interpreted within its principal metaphysical perspective—namely, as an expression of the doctrine of *ḥaqīqat-e jāmi‘a insānīya*, the “comprehensive reality of the human being.” God willing, we shall attempt to unfold this fuller doctrinal context next time.

**ANNOTATED TRANSLATION WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
AND NOTES BY MUZAFFAR IQBAL**