This has meant that poets deliver their work in bite-sized couplets, pausing between stanzas and often repeating their lines for better audience assimilation. Great ghazal composers like Nasir Kazmi have enjoyed the adulation reserved in the West for pop stars, thanks not only to the *mushaira* performances—and a public *mushaira* can attract over a thousand listeners—but also to their work being sung by the greatest singers of the Indian subcontinent. Ghazals are often to be heard on radio and television; and, as performance poems and songs, they can and do reach many non-literate listeners. Frequently ghazals have been incorporated into Urdu and Hindi cinema, and even theatre, thus reaching all classes of people. Popular Indian and Pakistani cinema has a strong romantic streak and the ghazal is well suited to this medium.

I have retained in my translations even though it may take the English reader some getting used to. The signature line has the effect of drawing in the poem from the universal to the individual, and from distance in time and space to the here and now. It is a distinctive feature that can contribute to the enjoyment of the ghazal.

Each couplet of a ghazal is an aphorism, often Gnostic. This is especially so in the case of the final couplet, which is often the opportunity for some philosophical musing. This is one of the characteristics of the ghazal that has made individual couplets eminently quotable. Thus Basir Sultan Kazmi's "Tomorrow's Trees" ends: "those who tread with greatest caution are the ones who stumble." Such quotable lines may be found also within the body of the ghazal.

Ghazals abound in such traditional symbols and images as: the teasing—even cruel—beloved, the moon, the firefly, the rose, the thorn, the garden, the desert, the caravan, the caged nightingale, the gallows, the candle, the moth, and so on. Many symbols have Sufi connotations that give the ghazals a mystical interpretation in which the beloved may be God, the saqi or "cup-bearer" may be a spiritual guide, while the lover who drinks wine may be the spiritual aspirant who receives divine wisdom. In a mushaira, the audience will be familiar with such conventions and will appreciate the depth and richness that they can impart.

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