

DIWAN-E SHAMS: GHAZAL NUMBER 2430

Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī / Ahmad Javaid

Introduction

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.

Opening with a declaration of the seeker’s departure from the ephemeral realm (*der-i fānī*) toward the station of permanence (*baqāʾ*), the poem immediately situates the wayfarer not within the landscape of mere longing or abstraction, but upon the active path of realization—marked by certainty (*yaqīn*), not conjecture. 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 Qurʾānic allusions, and the ontology of *insān-e kāmīl*—the Perfected Human.

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. The translation attempts to preserve the oral texture of the lectures.

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Each couplet advances the transformation of the self. The soul is first shown to transcend bodily limitations and lower faculties—*nafs*, ‘*aql*, and *rūḥ-i ḥaywānī*—until it is affirmed as *jān-i jānī*, the “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 Qur’ānic 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.

A striking shift occurs as Rūmī places this singular soul in relation to the entire cosmos. In a night where all the world’s caravans rise toward the heavens, the solitary seeker is himself described as “a hundred caravans.” The metaphysical implication is clear: the human being who realizes his divine capacity not only surpasses creation but enfolds it within his own interior reality.

The ghazal culminates with paradoxes that deepen the mystery: the sun of the unseen concealed in a particle, majesty hidden in servitude, and the traveler constructing new dimensions beyond time and space. In its final address, Rūmī urges the wayfarer to cast off all external forms and unveil the self’s luminous reality, a fusion of the hidden and manifest, servant and sovereign, echoing the Qur’ānic anthropology of vicegerency.

This poem thus presents not merely a mystical vision but a complete ontological anthropology—an articulation of what it means to be human in relation to God. Through a masterful interplay of metaphysical exposition and poetic form, Rūmī performs the very transformation he describes. In what follows, we present the full Persian text, poetic rendering, and an English translation of the commentary on this remarkable ghazal by Ahmad Javaid. Javaid’s deep insights situate the ghazal within its classical and doctrinal contexts, and offers a close reading of its metaphysical architecture. Notes on his commentary have been added by the translator.

The commentary was delivered in a series of lectures in Lahore, Pakistan, under the general title of “A study of select ghazals of Rūmī”. His commentary on ghazal number 2430 spans lecture numbers 10-15. This installment covers the first couplet.

The first couplet of ghazal 2430 of *Dīwān-e Shams* offers a rigorous philosophical and metaphysical exposition of Rūmī’s poetics. The couplet, “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,” becomes a portal into the ontology of the perfected human being (*insān-e kāmil*) as envisioned within the classical Sufi tradition. Through

a nuanced reading, Ahmad Javaid unlocks this verse as a concentrated articulation of the self in motion—cosmically, spiritually, and ontologically.

The commentary opens by situating the traveler not as a speculative thinker or philosophical adventurer, but as one who has already attained the necessary interior clarity and orientation for the path. The journey, as Rūmī conceives it, is not from ignorance to knowledge, nor from doubt to belief, but rather from the known to the known—*ma'lūm ilā ma'lūm*—a movement grounded in direct cognition (*ʿilm*) and certitude (*yaqīn*). The metaphor of riding the steed of *baqāʾ* (abidingness) evokes the non-temporal register of this ascent, aligning the traveler with the realm of permanence rather than transience.

Javaid interprets *asp-e baqāʾ* not as a poetic flourish but as a metaphysical marker, recalling the *burāq* of the Prophet Muḥammad's *miʿrāj*. The addressee of the verse—though temporally situated—is shown to be operating with resources that originate beyond time and space. His motion, paradoxically, does not arise within temporality but rather gives rise to time and space through his spiritually charged directionality. The *deyr-e fānī* (perishing tavern) is interpreted as the ontological structure of multiplicity: the temporal world construed as a collapsed sanctuary of illusion. Rūmī's scorn of this domain is not merely poetic; it is metaphysical, marking the world as a “temple of shirk,” where multiplicity is mistakenly taken as real, and the seeker of unity is called to depart from its veiling apparatus.

A central hermeneutical focus lies in the dual attributes *dānā* (knowing) and *bīnā* (seeing). These are not merely epistemic faculties but signify an integration of cognition and spiritual vision. The traveler does not merely perceive the path; he generates its recognition within consciousness. He knows the goal not as an abstraction but as an inner certainty; he sees the road not as a projection but as an ontological disclosure. These faculties culminate in a state wherein subject and object, knower and known, become fused: the traveler becomes the path, the movement, and the destination.

Javaid extends this interpretation by invoking the Sufi metaphysics of *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ*: the self annihilated in the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and reconstituted as its vessel. The commentary draws further attention to Rūmī's poetics of impersonality and universalism. The “I” in the poem, when it appears, does not represent the historical Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, but the archetype of the human soul—the *ḥaqīqat-i insānī*. This marks a departure from conventional poetic ego and gestures toward Rūmī's radical effacement of self in favor of divine expression. Javaid emphasizes that Rūmī's speech is never less than his insight—unlike ordinary poets who remain beneath the weight of their own words. Rūmī speaks from the summit of both *ʿirfān* (gnosis) and *ʿishq* (love), rendering his poetry irreducible to analytical commentary.

Finally, the commentary posits that the first couplet, and by extension the entire ghazal, culminates in *naʿt*—a devotional praise of the Proph-

et Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace. Though unnamed, the figure addressed is shown to embody the complete realization of the human ideal: one who rides the burāq of baqā', departs from the world of perishability, and moves toward the Real with knowledge that transcends even selfhood. In this reading, the ghazal is not merely mystical autobiography or philosophical meditation—it is a veiled ode to the Prophet, whose spiritual journey (the mi'rāj) is the highest model of ontological ascent.

Thus, the first couplet of ghazal 2430, in Ahmad Javāid's masterly exposition, becomes a complete metaphysical diagram: it encapsulates the ontology of multiplicity and unity, the epistemology of vision and knowledge, the paradoxes of motion beyond time, and the inexpressible intimacy of divine encounter. It marks the beginning of a spiritual itinerary that is simultaneously poetic, philosophical, and theological—culminating in the recognition that Rūmī's verse is itself a form of *mi'rāj*, a rhythmic ascent toward the unnameable Real.

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; Ahmad Javāid; Sufi metaphysics; *insān-e kāmīl*; spiritual journey; *fanā'*; *baqā'*; *burāq* symbolism; Islamic philosophy; ontology of the self; epistemology of vision; *dānā*; *bīmā*; *al-Haqq*; unity of being; *mi'rāj*; *na't*; *deyr-e fānī*; *sayr ilā'Ilāh*; *shu'ūr*; Islamic cosmology; ontological anthropology; Persian–Sufi poetics; mystical epistemology; theophanic humanism.



ای آن که بر اسب بقا از دیر فانی می‌روی
دانا و بینای رهی آن سو که دانی می‌روی
بی‌همره جسم و عرض بی‌دام و دانه و بی‌غرض
از تلخکامی می‌رهی در کامرانی می‌روی
نی همچو عقل دانه چین نی همچو نفس پر ز کین
نی روح حیوان زمین تو جان جانی می‌روی
ای چون فلک دریافته‌ای همچو مه دریافته
از ره نشانی یافته در بی‌نشانی می‌روی
ای غرقه سودای او ای بیخود از صهبای او
از مدرسه اسبای او اندر معانی می‌روی

*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.*

ای خوی تو چون آب جو داده زمین را رنگ و بو
تا کس نپندارد که تو بی‌ارمغانی می‌روی
کو سایه منصور حق تا فاش فرماید سبق
کز مستعینی می‌رهی در مستعانی می‌روی
شب کاروان‌ها زین جهان بر می‌رود تا آسمان
تو خود به تنهایی خود صد کاروانی می‌روی
ای آفتاب آن جهان در ذره‌ای چونی نهان
وی پادشاه شه‌نشان در پاسبانی می‌روی
ای بس طلسمات عجب بستی برون از روز و شب
تا چشم پندارد که تو اندر مکانی می‌روی
ای لطف غیبی چند تو شکل بهاری می‌شوی
وی عدل مطلق چند تو اندر خزانی می‌روی
آخر برون آ زین صور چادر برون افکن ز سر
تا چند در رنگ بشر در گله بانی می‌روی
ای ظاهر و پنهان چو جان وی چاکر و سلطان چو جان
کی بی‌نیت پنهان چو جان در بی‌زبانی می‌روی



*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 Maṣṣūr, 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

The ghazal of Mawlānā that we are about to explore today revolves around a central theme, which, put simply, is the multi-directional motion of the idea of man.¹ One aspect of this motion is outward. Now, when we say *idea of man*, what we mean is this: the distilled essence of human existence—a being who not only possesses awareness of his own consciousness, but who is also capable of traversing the path of completion both externally and internally.

So this ghazal, in a sense, expresses the movement of this idea of man: outwardly, in a cosmic context, and inwardly, in an introspective or *nafsī* context—that is, in the domain of the self, the microcosmic reality.² If we borrow a term from Iqbal for clarity, we might say this is a reportage of the Self in motion once it has attained its essential integrity. That is, when the human being has established himself upon his *jawhar-e-takmil*—his essential completeness—when he has become a *qualified and authentic self*.³ But this Self is not a crystallized self, not a frozen identity.⁴ It does not halt its ontological journey or spiritual progression at any presumed point of perfection. Why? Because this Self derives its reference point from God. Its principle of authenticity is rooted in the Divine. Its theological orientation (*ilahiyātī siyāq-o-sabāq*) is such that even after achieving perfection, it remains in motion, in process, ever unfolding.

So, although it may be called a *kāmil khudī*—a perfected Self—in one

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1. “Idea of Man”: A philosophical phrase that aligns closely with *insān al-kāmil* (The Perfect Human) in Sufi metaphysics. It refers to the essential blueprint of humanity that integrates both divine origin and existential potential.
 2. *Āfāqī / Nafsī*: A classic Sufi distinction—*āfāq* (the cosmos, the outer world) and *anfus* (the soul, inner self)—based on the Qur’ānic two-fold manifestation of the Divine realities in the cosmos and within the human nafs—*sa-nurihim āyātīnā fī ‘l-āfāq wa fī anfusihim*—*We shall show them Our signs in the cosmos and within their own beings until it becomes manifest to them that it is the Truth. Is it not enough about your Lord that He is witness to everything?* (Q 41:53)
 3. Qualified and authentic self: This echoes Iqbal’s *khudī*—a selfhood rooted in divine reference, not ego or individuality.
 4. “Not a crystallized self”: The perfected self (*kāmil khudī*) remains dynamic, reflecting *sayr ilā ‘Ilāh* (journey toward God) and *sayr fī ‘Ilāh* (journey within God), central to Sufi progression.

sense, its beauty lies in its motion, not in its stillness. Its realized perfection is only a prologue to its further possibilities, not the final word. Mawlānā, then, articulates this notion by portraying the Self as a seeker of perfection, a bearer of the essence of completion, who now—like a seasoned traveler—sets out to explore the infinite stages of its own perfection. And this movement unfolds in two realms, both running parallel and capable of influencing each other in real time: (i) the inner (*nafsi*) motion, and (ii), the outward (*āfāqī*, cosmic) motion.

Both these journeys share the same subject, cause, and destination. Mawlānā brings this vision to life through the imagery of this ghazal. But let me begin by a general note about Mawlānā: Unlike the conventional Persian ghazal—often composed as a loose gathering of thematically unrelated couplets—Mawlānā’s ghazals are not disjointed fragments. Rather, each verse maintains both a semantic and a technical connection with those that precede and follow it.

Let us begin, then, with the opening verse:

Ey ān keh bar asb-e baqā az deyr-e fānī mī-rawī
Dānā wa bīnā-ye rahī, ān sū keh dānī mī-rawī

*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.*

On the Preparedness of the Traveler

Now, you can see—can’t you—that the traveler is fully prepared for the journey. In what sense? In the sense that the steed is ready, and the traveler knows the goal of the journey. Moreover, the traveler is fully aware of his own *capacity* to travel. He possesses the provisions for the journey, the *yearning* for the journey, the *aptitude* for the journey, and a clear *destination* of the journey. All these dimensions are vividly present in this opening verse.

And when a traveler is not only unveiled to himself in the fullest sense, but is also able to express himself along with all his provisions and aims, then that traveler is a complete traveler. He is not indulging in *adventurism*. This is not a speculative or rational journey where the first step is known but the next is uncertain. You understand what I’m saying, right? A rational journey proceeds from the known to the unknown. But this journey—this whole journey—is a journey from the known to the known.⁵

5. “From the known to known”: *ma‘lūm* → *ma‘lūm*: The distinction between rational journeys (from the known to the unknown) and spiritual journeys (from the known to the known) reflects Sufi epistemology, where direct experience (*dhawq*) completes or surpasses reason

And when a journey moves from the known to the known, then its structure becomes sensory, experiential, and spiritual. Now, what do we mean by *spiritual* here?⁶

A spiritual journey is that which renders the abstract into the experienced, that translates the conceptual into something experientially real, or whose experience is of such depth and wholeness that the intellect draws upon it for its own highest constructions. In other words, the state of spirituality becomes the imagination of the intellect. Are you following me? Why does it become the intellect's imagination? Because it shortens the distance between consciousness and reality—a distance that usually remains hidden. What is a spiritual experience, then? It is that which diminishes the necessary epistemological gap between consciousness and the imperceptible (*ghayb*). Are you following?

So understand this: this is a spiritual journey. And what does that imply? Who is a *spiritual traveler*? One who is in a state of focused orientation toward the Real (*al-Haqq*)—with both his conscious awareness and his being.⁷ One who orients himself entirely toward the Real without claiming to have fully attained or to have lost it. Is that clear?

This is a journey not grounded in *analysis* but in *realization*. It is not analyzable but realizable.

Spirituality and the Identity of Self and Truth

Now, what I am trying to say is this: a spiritual traveler is one who, in relation to the Real, by the *warrant* of the Real, and on the basis of his connection with the Real, has brought his consciousness and his existence into a state of identity. That is, *his thought becomes his being*. What he knows becomes what he is. And the entire *content of his awareness* takes on the status of his continuous ontological condition. You see what I'm saying?⁸

(*‘aql*).

6. *Ruhānī / Spiritual*: A term not reducible to “emotional” or “introspective,” but defined by the *identity of consciousness and being*, and the realization of truths formerly conceptual.
7. *Al-Haqq*: One of the Beautiful Names of Allah, meaning “The Real” or “The Truth.” Spiritual orientation toward *al-Haqq* is a hallmark of the Sufi path. See Gibril Fouad Haddad, “Beautiful Names of Allah,” in *The Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān* (IEQ), Vol. I, pp. 360-381.
8. *Wahdat al-shuhūd / wahdat al-wujūd*: The identity of consciousness and being recalls the metaphysical doctrines of “unity of witnessing” and “unity of being”.

So when one sets out upon a journey toward the Real, with this force of single-minded orientation, and when the identity of consciousness and being becomes his provision, then every motion toward the Real becomes a new degree of perfection. That is what defines a spiritual traveler.

And now you can see how precisely and profoundly all of this flows directly from the opening verse. I don't mean we are *attributing* these meanings to the verse—I mean they are *derived* from it; although there is interpreter's license to attribute meaning to poetry.

On the Interpreter's License

Any interpreter is given a kind of license—the freedom to ask: *What might the poet be trying to say here?* But more precisely, the role of the interpreter is to say: *Here is what I understood from this verse.* Isn't that right?

Because the poet is speaking in a universal medium, his expression exceeds his mind, exceeds even his own intention. Only Allah, or those protected by Allah, can be said to speak words that are lesser than their inner awareness. In other words, their inward grasp is greater than their outward expression. These are the people of revelation (*wahy*)—Prophets.

You see, for the one who is a bearer of revelation, Allah grants him this supreme gift: revelation is both his content—with all its truths—and his expression—with all its words. The proportion between the words of revelation and the truth of revelation mirrors the relationship between prophetic consciousness and prophetic speech. So—you understand, right?—the prophets are greater than their words; their insight surpasses their expression.⁹

As for others—whether it be Rūmī or Bīdel or anyone else—they remain *less than their expression*. So if someone comes along with a greater intellect, they may extract meanings from their verses that go far beyond what the poets themselves ever imagined. And those meanings can, quite legitimately, be counted among the *intended meanings* of the poem.

There are many examples of this: the poet hears a new interpretation of his verse and sincerely thanks the interpreter—“*Thank you for revealing this meaning from my words!*”

9. *Wahy* and Prophetic Consciousness: The distinction drawn between prophetic and poetic speech is a classic one in Islamic theology, emphasizing that prophets are endowed with *ilham* and *wahy*, transcending all human expression

Two Types of Poets

But even among poets, there are two special types: (i) the gnostic poet (‘*arīf shā‘ir*); and (ii) the lover-poet (‘*āshiq shā‘ir*).

Who is a gnostic-poet? One who has awakened the intellect within himself, brought it into action, and become a trustworthy bearer of awareness of the Real (*al-Haqq*).

And who is a lover-poet?

The lover is the one who has contained within himself the passion for the Real—a passion which stands as the greatest subjective evidence of the existence of the Real.

So, to become a bearer of awareness of the Real (*ḥaqīqat-shinās*) and a manifestation of the Real’s existence—those who are gifted with this duality conceal more meanings in their poetry than any interpretation can reveal. Even if you bring your very best interpretive skills to their poetry, their *intended meanings* still go beyond your grasp.

And that, I would say, is almost certainly the case here.

On the Greatness and Uniqueness of Rūmī’s Poetry

Rūmī belongs to that exceedingly rare category—one of only two or three individuals in the entire Persian–Urdu tradition—whose *intended meanings* in poetry exceed the cumulative yield of all critical investigation. I do not say this lightly: to the best of my knowledge, there is no other poet in Persian, Arabic, or Urdu whose conscious intent surpasses what the world’s scholars can extricate from the text.

What happens when you truly engage with Rūmī is this: no matter how much effort you exert in commentary, a kind of awe-filled humility overtakes you. Only then can you approach his verse with even a fraction of the confidence needed to be called an interpreter. No other poet inspires this. When interpreting others, even the most perceptive reader feels some uncertainty: *Surely this was not what the poet intended, or perhaps my interpretation surpasses the poet’s own intent*. This hesitation is natural. But with Rūmī—when you draw seven heavens’ worth of meaning from a single line—you can rest assured that you are still operating within the range of his intended expression. These meanings are not projections—they are emanations.

This is because Rūmī’s meanings are not structured like Iqbal’s—philosophical—nor like Bīdil’s—metaphysical—or from another perspective philosophical; Rūmī’s meanings emerge from the fusion of two unmatched powers: (i) his unparalleled gnostic insights (‘*irfānī quwwat*), and (ii) his

unmatched passionate intensity of love (*‘ishqī quwwat*).¹⁰

No one else in our tradition has stood with one foot on the summit of gnosis and the other on the summit of love. It would be foolishness to imagine anyone more saturated in love than Rūmī, and ignorance to claim meanings can be richer elsewhere. I say this as a statement of fact about the poetic tradition as a whole.

Rūmī’s verse is such that the earth touched by his foot is higher than the sky reached by his commentators. Is it any surprise, then, that every generation has regarded interpreting Rūmī as a sacred task? And is it not remarkable that every commentator, every person who engages with Rūmī, inevitably sees himself as his disciple (*murīd*)?

There is no exception to this.

Even with someone like Ibn ‘Arabī—and what a towering intellect!—we find commentators assuming the role of correctors. They identify errors, offer criticisms, supplement what they see as gaps in his insight. You’ll find this throughout the literature: “This point eluded the Shaykh”; “This matter needed elaboration.”

But not with Rūmī.¹¹

No one has ever imagined they could *add to* Rūmī, let alone *encompass* him. And to encompass him would mean to internalize his passion—to carry his spiritual heat within yourself. This is impossible. To grasp the full force of his spiritual vision with your own consciousness—that, too, is impossible.

Our entire intellectual and poetic tradition agrees on this. And see how he speaks, like a sovereign: unconcerned with lexicon, unfettered by conventions of language, unbound by the compositional rules of verse.

What is Rūmī’s poetic miracle? That he enslaves the language, not just in form but in essence. Where else do we find such mastery? He writes not to fit meaning into words, but because meaning bursts the limits of language. For Rūmī, the meanings already present within the word are always less than the meanings alive within his being. This is what he tells us in every poem: The passion stored inside the word is but a faint flame compared to the burning

10. *‘Irḥān and ‘Ishq*: Here, Ahmad Javaid describes Rūmī’s verse as uniquely formed by both *‘irḥān* (gnosis) and *‘ishq* (love), a rare synthesis in the Sufi tradition. Most poets are weighted toward one or the other.

11. Interpretive humility: The assertion that no one attempts to correct Rūmī, unlike Ibn ‘Arabī, points to the tradition’s reverence for his speech as transcendent and saturated with unveiled truth (*kashf*).

that flows within me.¹²

We are reading the poetry of such a man!

Return to the Opening Verse

So then—do you now grasp the theme of this verse? That the *self*, upon recognizing its spiritual origin, and realizing its divine affiliation, now orients itself fully toward the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and sets out on the path of perfection. That is the journey.

And Rūmī's poetry—each verse—possesses the power to make the soul *majdhūb*, enraptured, magnetized. And look—Rūmī rarely uses his own name. He does not speak in the first person in the ordinary way. You'll never find him saying "I, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī." Rather, when he says I, he speaks as if representing the universal human reality. His speech is not personal. This is one of his miracles: his poetry is not personal. It is not rooted in ego. He does not position himself above or below anyone else. Nowhere in the *Dīwān-e Shams* does he mention his name. But when he does say I, as he does in this poem we have been discussing—and I can't recall the exact line just now—it seems he is momentarily revealing one of his many inner stations. It's as though *ta'allī* (self-exaltation) has suddenly seemed less than worthy to him. Only Rūmī could say that. Only Rūmī among all poets!¹³

Try it yourself. Take any person, no matter how masterful in their field: a Hegel in philosophy, a Hume in psychology, a T.S. Eliot in poetics—if they truly begin to understand Rūmī, they will be reduced to that of being children. If they are not, then they have not understood their own discipline.

Even the most formidable philosophical intellects become as primary school students when faced with Rūmī. And remember: his concern is *not* philosophy. Nor psychology. But the structures of Truth—mental, spiritual, and existential—are so fully formed within him that he can express them with a precision that no one else dares attempt.

So if someone masters a single facet of truth and builds an entire discipline around it, they are still just a child compared to Rūmī.

12. The notion that Rūmī's meanings surpass the lexical content of his words reflects the Sufi view that truth cannot be contained within language—see also the concept of *ishārah* (allusive expression).

13. Poetic ego-effacement: Rūmī's deliberate avoidance of personal reference and his use of *universal subjectivity* aligns with Sufi ideals of annihilation of the self (*fanā'*) and the voice of *ḥaqīqat-i insānī* (the universal human reality).

Iqbal on Rūmī

Iqbal praised Rūmī beautifully:

گستہ تار ہے تیری خودی کا ساز اب تک
کہ تو ہے نغمہٴ رومی سے بے نیاز اب تک!

*Your selfhood still strums a scattered chord,
For you are yet untouched by Rūmī's song.¹⁴*

He did justice to the role of the *murīd*.

Let us now return again to the opening couplet:

*Ey ān keh bar asb-e baqā az deyr-e fānī mī-rawī
Dānā wa bīnā-ye rahī, ān sū keh dānī mī-rawī*

*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.*

First Layer of Meaning (*mafhūm*)

O you, in whom the idea of man has become actualized—in whom the process of human consciousness reaching its perfection has arrived at a definitive ontological point—you ride the steed of *baqā*³, ascending from this perishing world; you are lifted above this realm upon the steed of abidingness. You are wise and clear-sighted on the path—you know the road, and you see it.

That path lies both in your knowledge and within your immediate vision. Here we are presented with a remarkable reality: the very source that ensures you will reach your destination is both known to you and visible to you. The road upon which your ascending movement unfolds—its terminus lies already within your sight, even as you begin the first step. This is what defines a spiritual journey (*safar-e rūḥānī*). And what is a spiritual journey?¹⁵ It is when the goal and the desired object are both present to one's awareness. In other words, the journey is nothing but the gradual traversal, step by step, of a path that lies already in the presence of the destination.

Thus, the verse says: *you know the road, you see the road, and you ascend*

14. Muhammad Iqbal, *Zarb-e Kalīm*.

15. The exposition of the spiritual Journey by Ahmad Javaid defines this not as a movement from ignorance to knowledge, but from presence to deeper presence—mirroring the Qur'ānic principle of *ziyāda fī'l-hudā* ("increase in guidance"; cf. Q 19:76).

toward that which you already comprehend—your ascent is aligned with your understanding.

That, in brief, is the meaning of the verse. Let's now attempt to unfold this verse word by word. Later, in our third attempt, we'll try to uncover the spiritual meanings, truths, and passions hidden within it.

The word *ān*—"that one"—is not a poetic innovation of Rūmī's; it is standard Persian usage. In Persian discourse, addressing someone as *ān*—"that one"—rather than *in*—"this one"—is a way of elevating the addressed. It signals distinction and nobility.

So when Rūmī says *ey ān keh...*—"O that one who..."—he is highlighting the majesty of the one being addressed, a majesty to which there is no partial parallel in anyone else.

Here, Rūmī is intensifying the praise. He is saying: *You are the actualized version of the idea of man*. The *idea of man* (in its Platonic, metaphysical sense) exists in unity. Its *actualized manifestation*, therefore, must also possess that unity. So he is saying: the idea of man, with all its detail and its essential oneness, is fully embodied in you.¹⁶ Your journey, then, is not like a horizontal or earthbound movement, where ordinary mounts suffice. Your journey is not one that can be undertaken using the vehicles available to most people. Rather, your path is exceptional, and your provisions for the journey are equally exceptional. No one possesses awareness of your destination, or knowledge of your path, nor the power or capability to walk your path.

Therefore, your steed is the *burāq* of *baqā'*—not just any mount.

On the Phrase *Asp-e baqā'* ("The Steed of Abidingness")

Here the word *asp* literally means "horse," but its qualification by *baqā'* indicates that we should not take it in the ordinary sense. The verse contrasts two realms: everything here—*path*, *traveler*, and *destination*—is within the domain of *fanā'* (perishing). But if the *means* is connected to *baqā'* (abidingness), then it follows that both the traveler and his goal must also belong to the realm of *baqā'*.

So what kind of mount qualifies against *fanā'*? It is the *burāq*, of course—a vehicle not bound by time and space.

On *Fanā'* and *Baqā'*

Fanā' means to exist within time and space—to be subject to their laws. *Baqā'* means to exist beyond time and space, transcending temporality and

16. Idea of Man: Echoes the Platonic *eidos*, or the Qur'ānic *fiṭra* (cf. Q 30:30). Rūmī reimagines it as a metaphysical blueprint becoming realized in the perfect traveler.

spatial limitation.¹⁷

So this traveler, although moving within time and space, draws on resources and powers that are non-temporal and non-spatial. Thus, when the word *asp* (steed) appears here *qualified by baqāʾ*, we can no longer interpret it literally.¹⁸

The image invokes a *preexisting character*—a historical, not symbolic, figure: the *burāq*.

What is the *Burāq*?

The *burāq* is a historically established being—mentioned by name in Hadith reports, alongside others like *raḥḥāf*. You can think of it as a metaphysical figure, infused with physical dynamics—a being at the intersection where metaphysics dominates physics, but where motion and mechanics are still honored.¹⁹

In essence, what is being said is this: you ride the *burāq* of *baqāʾ*, ascending from the *deyr-e fānī*, this temporal tavern, this domain of existence that is governed by the laws of perishability. Though temporal, you are using non-temporal strength and provisions to break through the circle of time and space. Because—if we do not accept that this *ān* (the addressee) is temporal—then we are talking about God. But God is not a traveler. God is the destination. That's why we affirm: this *ān* is a temporal being who is operating within temporality through the power of non-temporality

On *Wahy* (Revelation) and the Actualized Self

What is *wahy*?

Wahy is precisely this: to knead one's temporal self into the substance of a non-temporal essence. That is, to embed your transience within eternity.

Why is Paradise eternal? Because Paradise is a metaphor for the truth that temporal beings are manifestations of a non-temporal essence.

So who qualifies for Paradise? Only the one whose temporality is rooted in a non-temporal origin. Thus, when the poem says you ascend upon the steed

17. *Fanāʾ and Baqāʾ*: In classical Sufi terms, *fanāʾ* is annihilation of the self in the Divine, while *baqāʾ* is abiding in God post-annihilation. Here, the terms are extended to describe ontological registers—perishable vs imperishable.

18. *Asp-e baqāʾ*: A composite image combining Persian and Islamic metaphysical poetics—blending historical symbol and philosophical abstraction.

19. *Burāq*: Refers to the miraculous mount of the Prophet's Night Journey (*isrāʾ wa'l-miʿrāj*), symbolizing spiritual elevation that transcends time and space.

of *baqāʾ*, it is indicating this very truth.

Let's now unfold another layer of this metaphor of *asp-e baqāʾ* ("the steed of abidingness").

The Paradox of Motion and Temporality

Motion is not possible without time. Motion is also not possible without space. If you reduce motion to zero, time collapses, and space collapses too. Here, an extraordinary paradox has been proposed: You have made non-temporal and non-spatial conditions into the very cause of motion within time and space.

Let me put it another way: motion is not a product of time—rather, time is born from motion. So, what about that *time* which gives birth to motion itself? It cannot be *temporal*, can it be?

That's why we say: motion is real—it is *ḥaqq*—by every account. But time and space, without the conception of motion, are merely abstract constructs. And the very conceivability of time and space is never anything more than a *formal appearance* (*zāhir-e zāʾid*). By contrast, motion is not something that can be merely imagined. It is not a fiction. It is a reality—an event, a *wāqīʿa*.

And this *event*—this reality of motion—establishes the categories and perspectives by which we perceive everything else.

Other people are moved by motion that is *derived from time*—but you are moved by the motion that gives rise to time and space themselves.

Your journey is not within time and space—your journey *produces* time and space.

On *Deyr-e fānī* (The Perishing Tavern)

Let us now turn to the second key phrase that appears in this verse alongside *asp-e baqāʾ*: that is, *deyr-e fānī*—"the perishing monastery."

Deyr is a very well-known and widely used word in Persian poetry. Anyone even somewhat familiar with classical Persian literature will recognize it instantly, and will also know its range of meanings.

It's one of those words that is applied to many different referents, though the name is one. This is a rule of the temporal-spatial world: one name can refer to multiple things (*ism wāḥid, musammāʾ mukhtalif*).

In contrast, the higher world follows the opposite rule: *the referent is one*, and the names are many.

Rūmī has not used the term *deyr-e fānī* as an empty metaphor. He has built a whole spiritual universe around it.

What does *deyr* mean?

It can refer broadly to the world, as in phrases like *deyr-e kohan* (“the ancient world”) or *deyr-e qadīm*. But its original and primary meaning is: a temple of fire-worshippers, or a sanctuary of idolators—in other words, a place of worship for those who follow the religion of shirk (associationism). It is the temple of those who consider multiplicity to be real.

Let me give you an example from Mīr:

*Deyr o ḥaram se guzre, ab dil hai ghar hamārā
Hai khatm is āble par sayr o safar hamārā.*

*We have passed through the deyr and the ḥaram—now the heart is our only home.
Our journeys end with this blister on the foot.*

In this contrasting view:

Deyr is the center of polytheistic religion,
Ḥaram is the sanctuary of *tawḥīd* (divine Unicity).

So *deyr* is not just any temple—it is the temple of those who take multiplicity as real. And from this perspective, the entire world becomes a *deyr*.

Why is that?

Because the world is a realm of multiplicity (*‘ālam al-kathra*). And when you begin to love and desire the constituents of that multiplicity, you become a worshipper of the world—a devotee of illusion.

To be a *dunyā-parast* (world-worshipper) means to make non-God your object of desire. And the very condition of something being “other-than-God” is that it exists in multiplicity. There is no *ghayr Allāh* (other-than-God) in the state of oneness (*wahdat*).

The Ontology of Multiplicity

Now, if you hold all these considerations together: Multiplicity is not real. And a thing that is *not real* is, by its very existence, a witness to its non-existence. Let that sink in.

Even if you lack the terminology to fully explain this idea, try at least to feel it: a thing that is unreal, even while it appears to exist, is testifying to its own annihilation.

This is because time and space are the sole causes of annihilation. Anything that has a passive relationship to time and space is *ma’dūm* (non-

existent)—and that’s why it is *fānī* (perishing).

If something were truly existent, it could never be perishing.

Why?

Because *existence* cannot include its own opposite. Existence cannot, at any stage, become non-existence. Just as non-existence cannot become existence, so too existence cannot become non-existence.

Therefore, what truly exists can never perish. And what is perishing is a kind of regurgitated non-existence—*vomited absence*, if you will.

So now you can feel the scorn in Rūmī’s phrase *deyr-e fānī*. He is belittling this entire world of time and space—this system of multiplicity that veils the principle of oneness, on the mental, experiential, and practical levels.

This *deyr*—this world—is a temple that will collapse, its worshippers will perish, its laws will fade, and so too will its goals, its paths, and its travelers. This is what *deyr-e fānī* signals.

***Dānā* and *Bīnā*: Knowing and Seeing**

Now we turn to the two remaining key terms in this verse: *dānā* (knowing) and *bīnā* (seeing).

These are two faculties of consciousness.

- When consciousness is introduced to the object, that is *seeing* (*bīnāʿī*).
- When consciousness itself generates the recognition of the object, that is *knowing* (*dānāʿī*).

To put it differently:

- When the object becomes present, consciousness sees it.
- When the object becomes fully intelligible, consciousness knows it.

An object outside the mind is incomplete. But when it enters consciousness, its deficiency is completed.

In this verse, both faculties are mentioned because the traveler:

- knows the destination (*dānā*), and
- sees the unfolding of the path (*bīnā*).

Now, let’s briefly separate this from the “path” for a moment, and focus just on *dānā* and *bīnā* as attributes of the perfected human being (*mard-e kāmil*).

These are both oriented toward the destination. He both sees it and knows it. He perceives its *form*—that is *vision*. He grasps its *essence*—that is *knowledge*.

Advanced Reflection: Unity of Subject and Object

There's another dimension to this: *dānā* is the one who internalizes the object; *bīnā* is the one who externalizes the subject.

This person does not know anything other than himself. He sees nothing but himself. His entire range of vision is merely the unfolding of his own inner gaze. All the objects within that vision are *contained within him*. This is when consciousness becomes both subject and object. It knows itself. It sees itself.

Now, because in this verse *rāh* (the path) is explicitly mentioned, we must interpret these faculties *in relation to the path*, not just to the self. But I shared this reflection so that we can fully appreciate the grandeur of what it means to be *dānā* and *bīnā*.

And once we grasp that, we can properly recognize the dignity of the one who walks this path.

On the Path (*Rāh*) and its Metaphysical Structure

When we view *dānā* (knowing) and *bīnā* (seeing) in relation to the *rāh* (path), it means this: you know the path that leads to your destination, inside and out.

Not a single aspect of that path is hidden from you—neither unknown nor unseen. This is a path that traverses both within you and without you.

That is, the *path is a microcosm*—composed of the entire cosmos and the interior of the human being. It is a path which, when walked upon, causes the traveler to move inwardly as well as outwardly, in a state of deep orientation toward the destination. The provisions for this path are spiritual discipline (*mujāhada*) and unwavering focus (*yaksūʿī*). The inner qualification for it is focus; the outer dimension is trial and exertion.

Inwardly, the path is smooth. Outwardly, it is filled with curves, heights, and valleys—being structured on the principle of trial (*ibtīlāʿ*).

You, the perfect one, fulfill both dimensions of this path with absolute excellence. So now we see: this is not one among ten possible paths. It is the one path that integrates all ten jewels. Its distinctiveness lies in being woven from the harmony of inner and outer dimensions.

On *Dānī* (You Know)

The phrase *ān sū keh dānī* means: “Whichever direction you deem appropriate, you proceed.”

But notice this: along that path, you employ all hidden potentials—those latent energies that could possibly lead to the destination are fully activated under the influence of your journey.

Your movement through the path makes it easier for others to reach the destination, because your footsteps draw forth every layer of connectivity between the path and the destination.

Now, consider the word *dānī* again. It is indeed from the root of knowledge, but used here in a masterful way.

It means: you know the direction, from beginning to end.

In the first hemistich, the emphasis is on the path. In the second, it is on the destination.

And because the destination is al-Ḥaqq, then knowing (*dānistan*)—not seeing (*dīdan*)—becomes the appropriate verb. Because the ultimate stage of knowing the Real does not diminish its innerness or its unseen-ness. Its unseen quality remains, which means your stages of perfection remain open and infinite.

In relation to the Real, therefore, only *dānistan* applies; *dīdan* (to see) is inapplicable.

On Knowledge Without Ego

Here emerges another profound meaning: seeing requires multiplicity, but knowing demands unity. To possess knowledge of the Real, your ego (*anā*) must be absent from your awareness of it.

This level—if even Ibn ‘Arabī had reached it—he would have been proud. What he once wrote as an ideal, Rūmī expresses as a present state of being. So when we say: you are both the known and the knower of your path, we mean: you are the path, the traveler, and the destination.

And yet, you’ve emptied every personal claim from your Self, and *realized* the very substance of the Self in relation to the Real. Without injecting any notion of *your own* into it. This is the summit of consciousness and the height of knowledge.

Final Clarifications on *Dānī*

You know and see the path, but your relationship to the path is neither identity nor otherness (*‘aynīyat nor ghayrīyat*). Those categories only apply in relation to the Real.

In this case, the Real is your destination. And toward that destination, your orientation is so complete that: the Real is for you something known in such a way that even your knowledge has transcended your self.

For ordinary people, knowledge begins and ends in the self. But for the *knower of the Real*, the Self dissolves in the Real. Here, knowledge

is filled with the Real—it is not your own. Your knowledge is higher than you are; it is free of you and filled with the Real. Hence, in *dānī*, knowledge and known are united: you move toward increasing stations of proximity (*maqāmāt al-qurb*) that you knew even before you moved through them. Your journey is the *exploration of the possibilities of experiencing the Real*—and by emptying yourself, you become complete.

The Paradox of the Empty Vessel

What is the greatest vessel in the world? The one that empties itself.

The best vessel is the one that becomes filled with something other than itself.

The full flowering of human consciousness is impossible unless its *main content* is not the ego.

Even if ego exists (and it must, for ego is existence), it must not be the personal ego—it must not be *my own selfhood*. If the self is filled with itself, it becomes cyclical—beginning in itself, and ending in itself. Now we reach the third narrative layer: You, O Perfect Human, O *insān kāmil*—even while spatially distant from the destination, you are existentially near to it.

Your distance is measurable in time and space, but your proximity cannot be measured, because your nearness is *beyond time and space*.

You are the one who has connected *temporality to the non-temporal essence of being*. You move in the world, but your direction is charged with eternal strength. You are journeying toward your goal not by worldly milestones, but through a sequence of subtle stations, each one bearing the fragrance of the destination. Even the path, in its very substance, is the destination. Every step you take lands directly upon the destination itself.

Conscious Realization and the Limits of Temporal Knowing

But the existential realization of the destination occurs continually. And the completion of your knowledge of the destination unfolds only *through the path*, through the passage of stations.

You have a relationship with the Real, an existential bond. And you experience that bond while remaining in the temporal world. But to achieve complete awareness of the Real, you must reach a form of consciousness that is not governed by the conditions of time and space. This transcendent consciousness is the only one that can grasp the Real in its fullness. This is knowledge in perpetual motion toward perfection.

The Human Being and Transcendence

So now we say:

O you who possess the perfection of being and of consciousness—who journey toward the destination with complete focus and passion—the destination you reach is only attained after experiencing the impossibility of attaining it. Not by belief in impossibility, but through experiencing the attainment itself. That experience becomes your proof of having arrived.

Summary

The human being is a composite of two circles—existential and conscious. Despite being bound by time and space, he carries within himself the ability to receive, internalize, and be transformed by realities that are non-temporal and non-spatial. What is *sh‘ūr* (consciousness) if not a sign that non-temporal reality exists?

If it didn't, why would we be gifted with such layered, subtle awareness? The very presence of consciousness demands that Truth exists, and that all modes of knowing and experiencing that Truth are essentially beyond time. So: what is the human being? He is the inheritor of the awareness of the non-temporal nature of Reality, and thus contains, even in his bodily structure, elements that defy time and space. Consciousness is always accompanied by existence. This shared presence reveals an origin and end of identity. And that identity testifies to a transcendent structure in the entire scheme of things.

Final Reflections: The Power of Rūmī's Voice

After these sessions on *Dīwān-e Shams*, do you not feel that your mind is left shaken, your heart rattled?

Even if we *do not understand everything*, we are left with a feeling of interior fulfillment. And that is how the voice of a great soul functions. In *Dīwān-e Shams*, Rūmī has rendered voice meaningful in a way that has no parallel. Anyone who reads it in a fitting tone and melody will find it unbearable—for it shakes the spiritual nerves of the listener.

Someday, God willing, we'll explore this phonetic system of Rūmī. At times, it feels as though the sound that would arise if Jibrīl, upon him peace, were to flap his wings—that is the sound Rūmī's verses carry. These sounds do not come from ordinary throats or ordinary chests.



A question: Is this a *naʿt*?

Answer: Yes.

When I said *burāq*, that was a hint in that direction.

And whenever we speak of the *idea of man* being actualized in its entirety, then—without naming him—we mean the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace. This is a *naʿtī* poem. And I intended to say so clearly at the end, especially in the final verse:

ey zāhir o pinhān chu jān, we chākir o sultān chu jān
kī bīnamat pinhān chu jān, dar bī-zabānī mī-rawī
O you—manifest and hidden, like the soul—
slave and sultan, like the soul—
when shall I see you, hidden like the soul,
moving in wordless silence?

This is not merely the end of a ghazal. It is the closing of a *naʿt*. It is a culmination in the *naʿt* of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace.

The closing verse of the ghazal—

ey zāhir o pinhān chu jān, we chākir o sultān chu jān
kī bīnamat pinhān chu jān, dar bī-zabānī mī-rawī

—ushers the poem into a different register. What we are witnessing is not merely the conclusion of a ghazal, but the consummation of a *naʿt*—a poetic praise of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace.

When Rūmī speaks of the idea of man being fully actualized—when he presents a figure who moves with complete knowledge, rides upon the steed of *baqāʾ*, traverses time with the power of the non-temporal, and integrates path and destination—then, without naming him, he is speaking of Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace.

The *burāq* is a clue. Rūmī does not invoke it explicitly, but when he speaks of the “steed of *baqāʾ*,” ascending from the perishing tavern, we are reminded of the Prophet’s Ascension (*miʿrāj*)—a journey in which the temporal self is borne aloft by an eternal vehicle. The description belongs, in its fullness, to no one other than the Prophet himself.

The verse is filled with paradoxes: hidden and manifest “like the soul,” servant and king “like the soul.” Here, Rūmī invokes the Prophet’s double majesty—his humility before God and his sovereignty among creation. He is

chākīr, the servant of Allāh, and sulṭān, the divinely appointed guide. He is manifest in the world, and hidden in divine nearness.

The question—“When shall I see you, hidden like the soul, moving in wordless silence?”—is not rhetorical. It is an address of yearning, of intimacy, and of mystical presence. It confirms that this final verse is not just about the journey of the perfect man—it is a longing for the Face of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace.

That is why this ghazal ends not with philosophical closure, but with devotional unveiling. Its final movement is not thought—it is na‘t.

Rūmī, in all his poetic grandeur, does not name himself. He speaks not as Jalāl al-Dīn, but as the human soul (*ḥaqīqat-i insānī*). But in the end, when he speaks of the one who is the embodiment of the idea of man, who contains the truth of all prophecy, who walks in wordless silence—the reader cannot but recognize the figure: Muḥammad, the seal of prophets, upon him blessings and peace.

Thus the ghazal ends. But the praise—like the journey—remains ever in motion.

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY MUZAFFAR IQBAL

(To be continued)