



Spiritual Romance in the Lyrics of Gulzar and Javed Akhtar

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Abstract: This paper is an approach from the comparative perspective of content analysis of selected popular film songs and gazals of different times written by two famous lyricists of the South-Asian (Indo-Pakistan) film industry, Gulzar and Javed Akhtar. The study revolves around the stylistic effects of their selected lyrics, looking forward to the metaphoric language preference in the tuned emotions of fusion effect combining spirituality and romance. While centring around some particular parameters (keywords), the study first analyses individually the two selected songwriters' using the lyrical language, and in the next level, it looks for the uniqueness of Gulzar's magic realism and Javed Akhtar's practicality and also leaves further open-ended scopes for future researchers to fill the probable gaps with similar literary and musical issues.

Keywords: Love, Separation, Longing, Admiration, Spirituality, Romance.

I. Introduction

1.1. Gulzar and Javed Akhtar are two highly celebrated lyricists in the music industry of Bollywood. Numerous amazing songs they wrote have been popular and touched people's souls with the soul and affection they have put into their creations. This paper will study the selected lovesongs written by Gulzar and Akhtar that are not only love songs but also spiritual poetry. The music or the composition of the songs, the picturization of them in the movies, and last but not least, the soulful singing of the fantastic singers behind these songs all make a perfect combination that complements the extraordinary lyrics and makes them shine exceptionally well. There are similarities between Gulzar's and Akhtar's poems when they talk about love. There are longing,

separation, melancholy, affection, happiness, similes and metaphors. However, their lyrics have their unique style, which makes them different from each other.

1.2. Methodology

The songs of Gulzar selected for this paper are *Humko Malum Hay, Ajnabi Shehar Hay, Sau Dard, Chhaiya Chhaiya, Saatrangi Re*, and *Tere Bina Besuadi*. These songs are congested with metaphors that tell an abstract, comprehensible and incomprehensible story. There are only a few lines in a piece that capture the narrative theatrically; there are two stories in two songs that are told like mirrors of opposing sides, one song being that of hopeful newness, another being that of hopeless loss. There are also songs addressed directly to a mysterious figure, confronting them to attain a justification for the painful love. Lastly, there is a song with the soothing lightness of a couple imploring each other to come back to them.

The selected songs of Javed Akhtar for this paper are *Baat Meri Suniye To Zara, Tumhe Aaj Meine Jo Dekha, Kuch Na Kaho, Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa Laga, Banke Tera Jogi* and *Jashne Bahara*. All six of these songs are either narrational or conversational. There are practical discussions around love and beauty, the freshness of new shy love and the expressions of them, and confessions of drowning in the spirituality of love described simplistically. These songs are more conversational and open than the storytelling technique of Gulzar. With close reading and analysis of the audio-videos of these songs, this paper will look into the uniqueness of Gulzar and Javed Akhtar's lyrics.

II. Gulzar's Intensity and Metaphors



2.1 Comforting the Lover with Their Own Story of Love

2.1.1 *Humko Malum Hay*

Humko Malum Hay is not only a song but a story summarizing half of the plot of the movie *Jan-e-Mann*. Gulzar has written this song in a way that contains the depth of rebellious and faltering love, which also fits into the storytelling techniques. The melodies with the lyrics take a short time of the sequence, but the statement established by the song has a long-lasting effect. The music simultaneously comforts the lovers, strengthens them in their quest for freedom, and also breaks the lovers apart with the hit of reality. The hook, repeated multiple times in the song, conveys an assurance and a sense of security that the pair shares when love is thick and the situation is thin. "We know that love is innocent, and it takes patience to sustain the fragile love with its naive mistakes"- is what they keep repeating to each other. Their decision to run away has been the call of revolution from the generation, and they answer the call of love because, as mentioned, love has only one last answer: to revolt. Eventually comes the part where the song portrays a faltering reality mixed with a fear of heartbreak and pity. With lots of doubt, he confesses: there will be a problem, inconvenience, and heartbreak for selfish reasons. He needs to stay away from her for two months, but the audience senses that he will not return, despite the promise of returning. The subtle pragmatism injected in the song works as a foreshadowing by the lyricist. However, he returns after his failures but no longer finds her anywhere. The anticipation of heartbreak turns into a hollow sadness. He writes letters and calls her over the phone, but she never responds. His voice did not reach her, somewhere where she was lost.

2.1.2 *Ajnabi Shehar HayandSau Dard*

Two people about to be a couple, still strangers but also connected with a spark, wander around; the song plays to wonder how strange life can be. Unknown places, even if they are known, unknown evenings, even life feels unfamiliar with that slightly known person. They wander and wonder how strange life can be, the life that stays, life that leaves, life that comes back. He confesses that even melancholy feels sweet after meeting her; that is the magic of her company. Now he reminds her of something from a shared imagination, of the night when she was relaxing on the clouds and wore the silvery moonlight for the cold, and the silver moonlight shawl caressed her to sleep with dreams. She remembers the imagination that they

shared as strangers. While this is the story that *Ajnabi Shehar Hay* tells, someone else is on the flip side with *Sau Dard*, with hundreds of pains, even hundreds of remedies, but only his love is missing. Like the dry, dead leaves lying on the ground, bleak, withered, and rustling through the leaves, he finds hundreds of paths, but only his love is missing. He wants the time to flow like water and the shores to suffer when the river takes a turn. There are hundreds of wishes, but the sorrow of losing her was never a wish, yet it happened.

2.2 Spirituality and Longing

2.2.1 *ChhaiyaChhaiya*

The word *Chhaiya* from the evergreen *ChhaiyaChhaiya* of the movie *Dil Se* translates to shade or shadow. The shade, in this case, is the shade or shadow of love that protects and nurtures. The song starts with the male lead trying to shade himself from the rain with his jacket, as the song says that whoever has the shadow of love will be directly blessed by the heavens. The scene then cuts to a memorable sequence of dancing on the train with utter excitement and celebration of the dreamy concept of love, urging us to indulge in the sweet shadow of love and dance. Then the dream of a mysterious friend or lover takes over, describing her who is close to heart but distant from the world. She is a fragrance that utters Urdu melodies. She is now in control of the male lead's days-nights-universe. Like a flower that hides, and like the uncontrollable fragrance of the flower that explodes, she gives her glimpses. The man wishes to keep her to himself like a sacred locket with holy verses. She floats like the dewdrops, paradise flutters around her. He earnestly looks for her in the leaves of trees to find any essence of her while he breathes. He admires her divine charms, but she is a conflict like a clash between sunlight and shadow. She amusingly changes her colours, which he trades with his soul. She is his day and night, his world and universe, that mystic friend, his beloved.

2.2.2 *Saatrangi Re*

This song is also addressed to the distant girl from *Dil Se* but with more angst and desperation. He calls her *Saatrangi*, someone so elusive to have seven colours on herself at once, whose heart is willful in her cruel game of unreachability. The shadow of his heart now belongs to her dark shadow as well. He demands to know why she is so distant, like a light fluctuating, giving false hopes and breaking the heart. Her occasional closeness to him feels like an emotion in



itself. He wonders if she is an unfulfilled dream or just a swaying shadow. He begs her to confirm when will her playfully painful storm end. Finally, she whispers as if taunting the helpless man that the fire of love cannot be controlled, that it will be blazing but never burn out, that it will confuse and hurt but never explain. For a moment, the man had some hope. When his eyes locked with her eyes, he felt a needle of affection, an ecstatic pinch in the heart. No matter what, she is a toxic fragrance in which he wants to be soaked to live; she is his life and ultimate desire. But by touching her, he puts himself in flames; his love shows up for some consolation, but even his pains now hopelessly cry. She feels him with a whisper and an indifference in her eyes. In his desperation, he collapses and prays consciously and unconsciously. After trying to get up, he moves, getting entangled in the middle of her paths; he begs to untangle his senses; he begs to be himself again, free from the sweet toxicity of her existence that entangles his heart and soul from within. His passion is to live for and die for her; he feels death is the only solution to escape her mesmerizing illusions. He wants to let himself go in the embrace of death which can heal his wounds and free his soul from her, who did nothing but everything to make him miserable. From a practical point of view, this song does not glorify longing for someone detached but portrays an unbalanced toxic relationship with wounded minds consumed by the unhealthy extent of love.

2.2.3 *Tere Bina Besuadi*

Unlike the previous two songs discussed here, this song is a longing for the genuine, sweet love of a couple who are forced to live separately, who miss each other so much that their life does not feel like life anymore without the counterpart; life is tasteless even to wake up from sleep without the better half. Without the beloved, the nights are empty, long, dry and weakening. The wife urges the husband not to go far away for work. She forbids him to leave in the call of a second wife, which in this movie *Guru* is a figurative word for distraction, here, a distraction against the wife who pleads her husband to stay. The wife sings that without the beloved, the moon's gleam feels fake, looking like a smog of yellow lifeless sand. The husband replies that gold is as dull as copper without her, but with her, a dry branch is as good and sweet as a luscious fruit. The song ends with them reuniting in a warm tight embrace, where the return requests are fulfilled.

III. Javed Akhtar's Casual Poetry

3.1 Lovers' Conversation

3.1.1 *Baat Meri Suniye To Zara*

In the movie *Kuch Na Kaho*, starring Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan, this song takes place at a wedding party, where the main leads are in a flirtatious battle in the form of music. The song starts with a plea to hear him out from the male lead for the female information. With pride, she allows him to deliver what he wants to say. He tauntingly asks her if she is so proud of her beauty and why she comes across with vanity, so much so that she remains arrogant to anyone who comes to befriend her. She vouches against the allegation but also implores why her arrogance is inappropriate, as she is beautiful, and the world bows down to her splendour. Even if she rejects someone's approach and abandons him with a brutal smile, the world calls that her charm. The flirting gradually becomes an argument of who deserves the most significant credit, the holder of the beauty or the eyes of the beholder, who appreciates the beauty. The man claims that he is the one to tolerate her cruel charms with a smile; he is the one who labels her tender cruelty as a charm. He is the one who picked up on a little aspect of hers and stretched it into a poem of enchantment. He states that the miracle of her beauty resulted from his admiration that bestowed her presence from land to the sky. The lady retaliates with the logic that his respect and appreciation for her prove that her glory is intoxicating. The man fights back with a series of counter-arguments. Her lips are like flower petals, her face is like a lotus, her eyes are the stars, and all these diamonds on her crown are indeed gifted by him, just like the value of a statue is given to it when the admirer worships it; such a strong claim that leaves her speechless.

3.1.2 *Tumhe Aaj Meine Jo Dekhaand Kuch Na Kaho*

In the same movie, the song *Tumhe Aaj Meine Jo Dekha* consists of two couples realizing their love and adoration for their partner by showering them with poetic praises. The man confesses that seeing his lady has changed his life, destiny, and world. She is not only his love but also his dream and his life. The lady replies that he is her desire, destination and path on the journey of love. She breathes for him; her heart beats for him. He replies that she is his sunshine and soothing shade, the colour of his life. They find each other in illusion and reality, celebrating life and love. The title track of the movie *Kuch Na Kaho* is an extension of a blissful confession of love with silence brimming with happiness, where words are



not needed, as the couple assures each other not to have to say anything because their silence conveys the music of love to each other. They recall their journey toward each other, their encounter was lite and soft, and their conversations were distant. And now they wonder what has happened to the hearts full of love. Their days and nights stay lost in each other's thoughts. They share each other's ideas and dreams and live in those dreams, fulfilling the awaiting wishes. She confesses the silence of her heart filled with emotions and teases him if he can hear them. He admits the trembling of his soul that captures the waves of emotions from her heart. And just like that, they stay in love without saying anything.

3.2 Fantasy and Separation

3.2.1 *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa LagaandBanke Tera Jogi*

In the movie *1942: A Love Story*, the iconic song *Ek Ladki ko Dekha To Aisa Laga* embodies simplicity and an abundance of admiration. With a monotonous tune throughout the music, the monotony is soothing and dreamy, not overbearing. There is a sense of distance between the admirer and the admired lady and a sense of hidden attachment between them. The initial beats of the song lay the basis of the song's melody, which casts a spell on the listener as the music grows. The admirer man beholds the lady, and she feels like blooming flowers, like a poet's dream, like a ray of sunshine in person and moonlight in dreams, like an innocent, playful deer of a forest, radiant, like a smouldering fire at the temple, like a burst of colour and freshness. She brings a scented cool breeze wherever she passes by. She is like a dancing peacock, like the harmonies of the fairies, like the personification of adornment. She comes to him, or her image walks up to him, like slowly, happily increasing intoxication, and he becomes a jogi or a monk dedicating his entire existence in devotion to the distant entity that feels like a goddess to him, something he loves, something he worships. Though *Banke Tera Jogi* is from a different film, and this song is more upbeat and exciting, the lyrics convey a similar confession of idealization and submission of love that consumes the admirer from land to sky with sunshine and moonlight and rain, intense enough to make him detached from the material world. He refers to the admired lady as his friend, lover, and goddess who has his heart and for whom he has made a temple in his soul dedicated to her. Interestingly, this song is a duet, where both the couple's male and female are addressing each other, being each other's devotees.

The detachment from the world and submission to the admired one bring colours into their life, stop them from thinking about any matter of the world, and lead their life happily being a Jogi for each other.

3.2.2 *Jashne Bahara*

From the historical drama *Jodha Akber*, this song captures the beginning stage of Jodha and Akber's budding relationship. The visuals during this song contain stunning views of the palace, the dream-like but quiet luxury of Jodha bathing in perfumes and golds, and Akbar pacing around in a shining abode. The song starts with one instrument, and gradually more and more agents add on, and the melody soars, similar to Jodha and Akber's relationship that gathers its easy and uneasy moments one by one and develops with love. The song begins from the pair's point of view, how the idea of love gets eclipsed by the grandeur of everything, but the fragrances are not attached to the flowers, as if nature is hiding in itself, hiding the bloom of love. The sceneries are withering, the thread of time is losing, and something is lost amidst all this, a spark without permission to come out. Jodha and Akber are together on the surface, with a harrowing chasm underneath, and they cannot understand if they belong to each other after all. They walk together and take glances at each other, but are still distant, like the two opposite shores of a river, always together but never connected. It upsets them how they are close but also not, as if a wall of glass exists in between. They are perplexed; this is not what they asked for from the universe. With the unacknowledged separation, none of them is happy here, where the meetings are stuffed tightly with the silence suppressing a surge of storm invisibly flowing out of their eyes.

IV. Concluding Remarks: Gulzar's Magic Realism and Javed Akhtar's Practicality

4.1. Both Gulzar and Javed Akhtar are extraordinary lyricists. Their songs give life to the movie, and their words are vibrant and full of life. The songs and the poetry injected in them simultaneously stand out as independent works with the storytelling and the positioning of words and work as an embodiment of the movie's essence. The lovesongs by Gulzar and Javed Akhtar selected here in this study tell a story captivating the audience. The brilliance that builds with the collaboration of lyrics, composition of the music,



and the film itself, is serene and heavenly. So, from the perspective of depth and importance, Gulzar and Javed Akhtar's lyrics are similar. However, something that makes them similar can also make them different.

4.2. To summarize the difference between them, Javed Akhtar relies on similes to express his thoughts in the song, and Gulzar uses Metaphors to convey otherworldliness; this is why Javed Akhtar's lyrics are more conversational and closer to practicality, where emotions and expressions are associated with tangible things. On the other hand, Gulzar's songs are more confessional and abstract, where metaphors explain intangible feelings.

4.3. *Baat Meri Suniye* is a competitive back-and-forth in the middle of flirting. The fight is to argue if beauty is subjective or objective if the admiration of the beholder causes the labelling of beauty. It is a realistic argument to have, whether the similes like a face like a lotus and lips like petals are authentic to the holder of the beauty, or it is an exaggeration of the admirer. *Tumhhe Aaj Maine Jo Dekha* and *Kuch Na Kaho* are simplistic but nuanced expressions of love where the lovers confess their actual experiences of change in their emotions and life. *While Ek Ladki Ko Dekha To Aisa Lagais* filled with numerous similes where the lady is compared to many other beautiful components, *Banke Tera Jogi* is someone admitting that their love for the other person makes them like a monk enthralled in their passion. Lastly, as discussed earlier, *Jashne Bahara* is a series of similes reflecting Jodha's and Akber's resistant attraction.

4.4. Gulzar's *Humko Malum Hayis* a piece of poetry enacted on screen with the help of magic realism, which is set in the natural environment, but the transitions of scenes give an otherworldly ambience in the progress of the story, with Gulzar's "we know that the sensitive love needs the patience to survive," all give the duration of the song a magical theatrical touch. *Ajnabi Shehar Hay* and *Sau Dard* are put on opposite sides of each other, where the first couple's new relationship is metaphoric as a beautiful new city, and the lonely lover's quiet misery on the opposite side in *Sau Dard* is also symbolic by the nature's activities parallel to his loss of love. In *ChhaiyaChhaiya*, a mysterious lover gets the metaphor of a shade of heaven, which is both abstract and understandable. *SaatrangiRe* compares the vagueness of a lover with an entity that betrays multiple colours and also

someone who embodies such type of death that gives comfort. And lastly, *Tere Bina Besuadi* is a straightforward but emotional narrative of separation, where the nights lose their taste, and the golden shine of the moon feels like fading; by Gulzar are all the abstracted metaphors but also somehow relatable for those who understand, and by Javed Akhtar, that are all grounded in reality making the listener experience a click with the words.

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