

# Rubai (Quatrain) as a Classical Form of Poetry in Persian Literature

Ms. Mina Qarizada

Lecturer in Samangan Higher Education, Samangan, Afghanistan  
Master of Arts in English, Department of English  
Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India  
Email – minanajib11@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Studying literature, including poetry and prose writing, in Afghanistan is very significant. Poetry provides some remarkable historical, cultural, and geographical facts and its literary legacy of a particular country. Understanding the poetic forms is important in order to understand the themes and the styles of the poetry of the poets. All the Persian poets in some points of the time composed in the Rubai form which is very common till now among the past and present generation across Afghanistan. This paper is an overview of Rubai as a classical form of Poetry in Persian Literature. Rubai has its significant role in the society with different stylistic and themes related to the cultural, social, political, and gender based issues. The key features of Rubai are to be eloquent, spontaneous and ingenious. In a Rubai the first part is the introduction which is the first three lines that is the sublime for the fourth line of the poem. It represents the idea if sublet, pithy and clever. It also represents the poets' literary works, poetic themes, styles, and visions.*

**Key Words:** *Rubai, Classic, Poetry, Persian, Literature, Quatrain,*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Widespread geography of Persian speakers during the past centuries in the history of Afghanistan like many other countries, it can be seen and felt that only great men were trained in the fields of art and literature. The richness of this culture shows the capacity of its trained elite from different aspects of a particular country like Afghanistan, where only in the literary domain it can be mentioned that more than tens of big famous poets, writers and great philosophers who have lived in a millennium and this chain have continued until now. Poetry provides some remarkable historical, cultural, and geographical facts and its literary legacy of a particular country as Afghanistan. It also represents the poets' literary works, poetic themes, styles, and visions.

Studying literature, including poetry and prose writing, in Afghanistan is very significant. It is because of the monumental challenges that remain for those who choose to compose and publish certain work and for those whose works are engaged with personal struggle of socio-political issues. Among the artistic and literary forms, poetry holds a greater place in the consciousness of the people of Afghanistan. The poems have different forms and styles and they differ from its richly diverse population. Poetry from its broad sense of appeal is considered to be used as a means of communicating important ideas, passing on stories and heritage, and making political statements. The important credit would be given to the classical poets such as Mawlana Jallaudin Rumi and Saadi Shirazi.

Studying literature, including poetry and prose writing, in Afghanistan is very significant. Poetry provides some remarkable historical, cultural, and geographical facts and its literary legacy of a particular country. Understanding the poetic forms is important in order to understand the themes and the styles of the poetry of the poets. All the Persian poets in some points of the time composed in the Rubai form which is very common till now among the past and present generation across Afghanistan. This paper is an overview of Rubai as a classical form of Poetry in Persian Literature. Rubai has its significant role in the society with different stylistic and themes related to the cultural, social, political, and gender based issues. The key features of Rubai are to be eloquent, spontaneous and ingenious. In a Rubai the first part is the introduction which is the first three lines that is the sublime for the fourth line of the poem. It represents the idea if sublet, pithy and clever. It also represents the poets' literary works, poetic themes, styles, and visions.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Due to the presence of a mutual relationship between the literature and social conditions, two factors can be involved in the emergence and direction of poetry. The poetic flow factors can be seen either out of the text or intertextual. These factors cannot be ignored by a scholar or an artist in the field of literature. Understanding the poetic forms is important in order to understand the themes and the styles of the poetry of the poets. Farzana Marie states in her book, "Loud Poems Like Guns" about the role of society that, "A society needs poets and storytellers to reflect its pain- and joy." (2015, p.13) The landscape of contemporary literature especially poetry in Afghanistan is a very rich one which is getting much richer by the recovery of the country in general. These changes can be seen not only in

large cities like Kabul, Herat, Balkh, but even in small cities like Faizabad and others. There is no doubt about the historical influences of cultural, social and political, educational and literary production on different regions of Afghanistan. As Marrie adds: "A study of the poet's and poetry of this region, then, is a vital step towards understanding the poetry of Afghanistan as a whole (Marrie 2015, p. 6).

There are several classical poetic forms in Persian Literature and the most common ones are known as Rubai, Ghazal, Qaseda, Masnavi, and Qita and this paper examines an overview of Rubai as a classical form of Persian Poetry in the field of Afghanistan Literature. Rubai is one of the ancient Persian poetic forms. It is original to this language. The other classical forms of poetry such as Ghazal, Kasida, Masnavi, and Kita are all originated in Arabic literature. According to some resources, the origin of Rubai as a poetical form backs seven thousand years ago based on Zoroaster's time. Generally, Rubai is a short poem of four lines which has two couplets in which the first, second and the fourth have the same rhyme, but sometimes all four lines are rhymed. It has its own composing form which is called Rubai meter. Each Rubai is separated poem and it cannot be considered as part of another long poems.

Though it is original to Persian language and Literature, it is considered as one of the classical forms along with other forms such as Ghazal and Masnavi. Most of the scholars believed that "Rubai" is one of the most ancient forms of Persian Poetry. It is said to be very common in Arabic poetry which was contributed to Persian Literature later on. Rubai is a literary term which is called a quatrain or two couplets in English language. It is a very short poem which has four lines. It is a form of poetry in Persian poetry with its derivative function and form in English as well as other languages.

### 2.1 Rubai (Two Couplets)

Rubai is a kind of Persian poetry which is the most specialized and individualized form of poetic expression in literature. According to the classical form of poetry in Persian Literature, Rubai is written with the rhyme-scheme of AABA or AAAA in four lines. There are several points of views of scholars about the form and definition of Rubai. There are several points of views of scholars about the form and definition of Ruba'i. Paul Smith defines Ruba'i as: "The Ruba'i is a poem of four lines in which usually the first, second and the fourth lines rhyme and sometimes with the radif (refrain) after the rhyme words...sometimes all four rhyme" (2015, p.9).

### 2.2 Parts and Metre in Rubai (Quatrain)

The composed poem has metres which is called Rubai metres. Every Rubai in a poem is a separate poem and not considered as part of a longer poem. Rubai has two couplets or four lines which are different from Arabic poetry in terms of forms and metres. One of the greatest poet of Persian who is known as the father of classical Persian Poetry is Rudaki. He was the creator of Rubai's metre. The metres in the lines of the poem can be recognized by the repetition of the rhyme in the metre.

The word Rubai means "two couplets" which has four lines in length and different metre. Rubai was invented in Persian poetry for the first time by a poet named Rudaki in 941 A.D. Rudaki is one of the famous poets of the Persian literature who tiered to organized the line's metre in a new form and came up with Rubai form which has the repetition of the rhymes four times in two couplets. He is called the "The Father of Persian Poetry". It was two centuries later that Sham-e- Qias, wrote about the moments of poetic history and the effect of the new form on the people in different ages of poetry. He says: "This new poetic form fascinated all classes, rich and poor, ascetic and drunken, rebel outsider, all wanted to participate in it.... the sinful and the good both loved it, those who were so ignorant they couldn't make out of the difference between prose and verse, began to dance to it". (qt in. Smith, p. 10).

There are four lines in the poem as the name suggests. The first three lines act as an introduction to the last line. Such poems became common among all the levels of the society and it is in its value till now. It was enjoyed by those who were member of noble and royal families and even those who were the point of praising by poets of their time. Rubai represents the themes of religion, wisdom, and amusing satire. In Persian literature, every major and minor poet has written poems in Rubai forms. The greatest female poems of the times are Mahsati and Jahan Khatun.

The key features of Rubai are to be eloquent, spontaneous and ingenious. In a Rubai the first part is the introduction which is the first three lines that is the sublime for the fourth line of the poem. It represents the idea if sublet, pithy and clever. All the Persian poets in some points of the time composed in the Rubai form. The two most famous female poets are Masahati and Jahan Khatun who composed Rubai in their era.

Ruaba'i was used in English by the translation of Robaiyat of Omar Khayyam by the American poet Edward FitzGerald in 1859. Omar Khayyam was one of the most famous poets of medieval period in Persian Literature. The information that has been said about the biography as well as the contributions of Omar Khayyam by Edward FitzGerald includes all those required information to know Omar better. Khayyam, Omar (1053-1123) was a Persian poet, astronomer, and mathematician who reformed the Moslem calendar. He was known as the poet of Agnosticism. Rubaiyat (1120) of Omar's best-known work is a collection of epigrammatic quatrains "quatrain". Omar's poems are more widely known to English readers through Edward Fitzgerald's brilliant nineteenth century translation.

His translation became very popular all over America by the turn of the century and the majority of the people started writing in this form. On the other hand, Algernon Charles Swinburne has been the first one who imitated the

stanza form in English and later it was used widely. Robert Frost is one of those who used this form in his poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”. Here are the samples of the translated versions of FitzGerald’s Rubaiyat:

WAKE! For the Sun, who scatter’d into flight  
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,  
Drives Night along with them from Heav’n, and strikes  
The Sultan’s Turret with a Shaft of Light.  
(Rumi)

Before the phantom of false morning died,  
Me thought a Voice within the Tavern cried,  
“When all the Temple is prepared within,  
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?”  
(Rumi)

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing  
(Rumi)

### 2.3 The Female Rubai Writers of Afghanistan

#### Rubai of Rabia Balkhi

Rabia Balkhi is a famous poetess of Afghanistan from Medieval time. She was a princess. She was living in Balkh city which is located in the North of Afghanistan during the reign of Samanids in 9th century A.D. She belongs to a semi-legendary figure in Persian literature. She is known as the first woman writer as well as the first poetess of Medieval Era. Rudaki and Attar are the poets who wrote about Rabia Balkhi’s sketch of life. Her life references and records can be found Attar and Rudaki poetry. There is no specific data to specify her exact date of birth and death. She was the contemporary poet along with Rudaki. She belongs to a royal family of Balkh. Her father was a chieftain at the court of Samanid. Her father was reported to be from descended of Arab an immigrant who during the reign of Abu Muslim has settled to Balkh.

. The only existed reference about the life of Rabia is mentioned in Attar’s poetry. Attar has written about the great poetess of all the time in his famous poem “Ellahi Nama” in 428 verse of poem. There he has stated about Rabia and her living with his Brother Hares who was the king of Balkh after his father’s death. The love story of Rabia was narrated that she was in love with the slave of his bother and she has written love poems for Baktash and they both exchanged poems hidden from all. When his brother got to know about his sister’s love with a slave, he orders to put her in prison. In her last breathes Rabia wrote her final love poem on the wall of the bathroom with her blood and that poem is one of the most common love poem which expresses her true love to Bakhtash as the following lines mentioned in Paul Smith’s Book:

The love of you is reason that now I'm in prison:  
I tried to keep it secret, but who can one rely on?  
Love is a sea with shore that's always further on:  
One wise in such a sea won't swim, or will drown.

The selected poem of Rabia Balkhi is in the form of a Ruba’i which is the most ancient forms of Persian poetry. It is said to be one of the classical forms along with other forms such as Ghazal and Masnavi which were contributed to Persian Literature. Ruba’i is a kind of Persian poetry which is the most specialized and individualized form of poetic expression in literature

#### Rubai of Zainab Hotaki

Zainab Hotaki is one of the well-know Afghan woman who was daughter of Mirwais Hotak. She was a poet and a writer both in Persian and in Pashto. She did not have formal education, but studied hard under her tutors and later on she started writing and became a teacher in her father’s Harem. She was also the member of the counsel of her father due to her erudition and gave her ideas on some issues and affairs. One of her common Rubai is about the Independence that she wrote as:

The bright world looks dark to me.  
My heart has been cut to pieces by a sword.  
The whole Hotak tribe is grief stricken for  
Their crown has been snatched from them.

### Rubai of Mirmon Halima

Mirmon Halima has to be proudly recorded for she was a wise and very patriotic queen in the country's history by the late 19th century. She was known by the nickname of Babo Jan. Being a talented and a woman of virtuous character. She wrote poems as well. Her feeling as an ardent patriot is evident in her poems below

Raise for the sake of God, the flag of the independence,  
Over your shoulders, may the mouth of our nation,  
Be sweeten with the fruits of independence from now on,  
I will draw coilyrium on my eyes with the foot soil of the independence

I shall make a beauty spot out of my beloved's blood.  
Which will put to shame the roses in my garden  
Young love, if you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand,  
By God, someone is saving you far a token of shame.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

In short, "Poetry" from its broad sense of appeal is considered to be used as a means of communicating important ideas, passing on stories and heritage, and making political statements. The important credit would be given to the classical poets such as Mawlana Jallaudin Rumi and Saadi Shirazi. A study of the poets and their poetry of a particular region, Afghanistan, is a clear vital step toward understanding the poetry of Afghanistan as a whole.

There are several classical poetic forms in Persian Literature and the most common ones are known as Rubai, Ghazal, Qasada, Masnavi, and Qita and this paper examines an overview of Rubai as a classical form of Persian Poetry in the field of Afghanistan Literature. Among all forms of poetry, people like to read and write Rubai. It is one of the best forms of poetry that not attracted the old people, but also the new generation also has interest to Rubai and they are inspired by the greatest poets of all of Persian literature.

Thus, Rubai has its significant role in the society with different stylistic and themes related to the cultural, social, political, and gender based issues. The key features of Rubai are to be eloquent, spontaneous and ingenious. In a Rubai the first part is the introduction which is the first three lines that is the sublime for the fourth line of the poem. It represents the idea if sublet, pithy and clever. All the Persian poets in some points of the time composed in the Rubai form which is very common till now among the past and present generation across Afghanistan.

### REFERENCES:

1. Marie, Farzana. (2015). *Load poems like guns: Women poetry from herat, afghanistan*. Duluth Minnesota: City Cow Press.
2. Akhtarkhavari, Nesreen, and Anthony A. Lee. (2016). *Love is my savior: The arabic poems of rumi*. Michigan State University Press.
3. Loni, Nasibeh.(2015): Love breeze in poem of female poets from rabae qzday to simin behbehani. *European Academic Research Journal*, III (6).
4. Metcalfe, Heather. (2009). *Policy innovations- afghan women: Artfully forgotten*. A Publication of the Carnegie Council.
5. O'Donnell, Patrick S.(2015), *Poetry & islam: An introduction*. Santa Barbara City College, Department of Philosophy.
6. Smith, Paul. (2012). *Princesses, sufis, dervishes, martyrs & feminists: Nine great women of the east*. Australia: New Humanity Books.
7. ---. (2012). *Attar selected poetry: Translations and introduction*. Australia: New Humanity Books.
8. Zhwak, Mohammad Saeed. (1995). *Women in afghanistan history*. Peshawar: Katib Publishing Services.

### Web References:

- <http://jstor.org/stable/10.14321/j.ctt19631nt>
- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1939-3881.2010.00162.x/abstract>
- <http://euacademic.org/UploadArticle/1960>