

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROSODIC  
AND MUSICAL RHYTHMS IN URDU GHAZAL-SINGING

Peter L. Manuel

GAZAL-SINGING is one of the most popular musical idioms in North India and Pakistan. Heard in films, on the radio, and at concerts, gāzal-songs are performed in a number of styles for the masses as well as for aficionados of fine music and poetry. Yet despite its importance as an art form, gāzal-singing has been largely ignored by musicologists. This paper attempts to illuminate one salient aspect of the light-classical gāzal-song: the relationship between the poetic meter (bahr) of the text and the rhythm of the musical rendering. The primary questions to be explored are: (1) to what extent, and in what way, does the musical setting reflect the bahr, and (2) what factors govern the musical realization of the prosodic meter.

I. The Light-Classical Gāzal-Song

Because of its meter, its refined, flowery diction, its generally amatory content, and, above all, its extended, refrain-like end-rhymes, the gāzal lends itself naturally to musical rendering. The art of gāzal-singing in India dates back at least as far as the age of Amīr Khusrau (1252-1325), thereby predating the development of Urdu itself; the art attained an apogee of popularity during the nineteenth century, particularly in Lucknow under the patronage of Vājīd 'Alī Shāh (ruled 1847-1856). Gazals have traditionally been sung by members of the courtesan (tavā'if) class, and today some vestige of the consequent accompanying stigma, as well as romantic charm, persists in its public image.

At present, aside from tarannum,<sup>1</sup> a sort of melodic recitation, and qav-vālī, a Muslim devotional group song, two styles of gāzal-singing can be distinguished. By far the more popular style is that encountered in Hindi films; in this style, poems are set to wholly pre-composed melodies such that little or no improvisation can occur. Generally the singer is accompanied by an ensemble that includes Western as well as Indian instruments. Such "pop" gāzals, like most Hindi films themselves, vary considerably in their

tastefulness.

In the light-classical style, most singers are classically trained vocalists who improvise substantially in their performances. Accompanying instruments are generally limited to those commonly employed in the classical xayāl and thumrī (viz., tabla, tānpūra, harmonium and/or sāraṅgī). Light-classical gāzal-songs are usually, but not always, set to what is aptly called by some "sthāī-antarā" form. These terms, adapted from classical music, refer to the singing of particular miṣraḥs (hemistiches) in melodies centered in the lower and upper regions of the octave, respectively. The most common arrangement is as shown:

<u>Text</u>	<u>Rhyme</u>	<u>Melody</u>
1st couplet: 1st miṣraḥ	a	sthāī
2nd miṣraḥ (laggi)	a	sthāī
2nd couplet: 3rd miṣraḥ	b	antarā
4th miṣraḥ (laggi)	a	sthāī
3rd couplet: 5th miṣraḥ	c	antarā
6th miṣraḥ (laggi)	a	sthāī

and so on. Either line of the opening couplet (the matlaḥ) may be sung after each succeeding couplet.

The rhyme-scheme of the poem is musically reflected in the melodic form in the correspondence between the rhyming miṣraḥs (the matlaḥ, and even-numbered lines) and the use of the sthāī. Similarly, the discreteness in meaning between the couplets is reflected in the presence of laggi (an interlude in which the tabla player, improvising in fast tempo, comes to the fore), which follows each couplet. Sthāīs are pre-composed and do not vary significantly throughout the song. Antarās, on the other hand, while often adhering to a general melodic contour, are florid, melismatic, and improvised; the corresponding text is accordingly "free" in its lack of end-rhyme. In an inspired performance, the extended, rhapsodic antarā effects such a degree of suspense in anticipation of the completion of the couplet that the final arrival at the

rhyme of a shicr (couplet) is a dramatic, if not a climactic, moment.

## II. Meter in Urdu Poetry

The Urdu, as well as the Persian, gazals are written in conformity with Arabic rules of prosody (ʿilm-e carūz, "the science of versification"), the salient and relevant features of which may, for the sake of brevity and clarity, be summarized as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Meters are determined by the distribution of long (-) and short (◡) syllables in a line. While theoretically scansion is primarily "based on particularities of the Arabic script,"<sup>3</sup> in some instances pronunciation is the final determinant.

Long syllables are of two kinds: (1) consonant + long vowel, e.g., [jā]; and (2) consonant + short vowel + consonant, e.g., [jab]. Short syllables are of three kinds: (1) consonant + short vowel, e.g., the first syllable of [jigar]; (2) following a consonant preceded by a long vowel, and in turn followed by another consonant, e.g., [jāmpē]; and (3) at the incidence of two consonants following a vowel in a single word, e.g., [dard, dasht, ʿumr].

Long syllables are theoretically twice the length of short ones.

While a meter must be maintained faultlessly throughout the poem, the Urdu poet's task is somewhat facilitated by the practice of scanning various syllables (notably, grammatical endings, initial alif, and most common monosyllabic words) either long or short, according to the meter desired. In certain instances, two short syllables may be substituted for one long.<sup>4</sup>

Some idea of the variety and occasional complexity of Urdu meters can be gleaned from a look at the most commonly employed bahrs in Urdu poetry:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| (1) Hazāj         | ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - // |
| (2) Raml          | - ◡ - - / - ◡ - - / - ◡ - - / ◡ - - //   |
| (3) Raml          | - ◡ - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - //   |
| (4) Mujtass       | ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - - //   |
| (5) Muzari        | - - ◡ / - ◡ - ◡ / ◡ - - ◡ / - ◡ - //     |
| (6) <u>Khafif</u> | - ◡ - - / ◡ - ◡ - / - - - //             |

The following couplet of Mir Taqī Mir (1724-1810) is here scanned by way of example:

[xudā kō kām tō sauñpē hain main nē sab lēkin  
 rahē hai xauf mujhē vāñ kī bē-niyāzī kā]

I've resigned to God charge over all my affairs,  
 But still I dread his carelessness.

The meter is Mujtass.

### III. Bahr and Rhythm in the Sthāī

In determining the nature and extent of correspondence between the bahr and the musical rendering of a ġazal, one would best commence by seeking instances of correlation that would suggest an attempt, whether deliberate or ingenuous, of the composer-singer to integrate the two. One might expect the music to reflect the meter in three ways: (1) by manifesting the groupings of the various syllables into feet by means of phrasing or stress; (2) by differentiating those syllables designated in the meter as long or short by means of highlighting the former through extension, melisma, agogic or dynamic stress, and deemphasizing the latter by converse means; and (3) by constituting a direct translation of the meter into the rhythm by a combination of the above two (cf. example 2a, below).

The most likely site for such correspondence would be the sthāī, pre-composed, and regular in rhythm, rather than the florid, improvised antarā, the rhythm of which tends to be more diffuse and capricious.

That the rhythmic structure of the Persian āvāz<sup>6</sup> and Urdu tarannum are based primarily on the poetic meter has been demonstrated by Tsuge and Qureshi, respectively. The Urdu ġazal-song, however, differs from āvāz and tarannum in that whereas the latter two are usually rendered without fixed musical meter, but rather in a tempo rubato or highly variable rhythm,<sup>7</sup> the bulk of the ġazal-song is invariably performed in a specific tāl (usually Dādrā, Kahervā, or Rūpak<sup>8</sup>); only the antarā portions are occasionally rendered in free rhythm. Because of irregularity and asymmetry, many meters are not neatly accommodated into these tāls without some alteration of the theoretical relationship (2:1=-:.) between the syllables.

Moreover, it is not unlikely that many ġazal-singers, being primarily musicians rather than poets, have less knowledge of, or interest in, the intri-

cacies of prosody than do tarannum-reciters, who are generally poets themselves.

Finally, in tarannum, the text is more important, and the music correspondingly less so, than in the ġazal-song, with its distinct "conscious musical improvisation in a consciously perceived musical framework."<sup>9</sup> Although in ġazal-singing the words are crucial (more so than in xayāl or dhrupad), they are important mainly as inspirational bases for musical expression, as in the bōl banā'o of ṭhumrī; hence, such an artificial prosodic construct as bahr might naturally be expected to figure less conspicuously in the musical realization of a ġazal.

Given the above considerations, together with the variety of styles of ġazal-singing, we should not be surprised that the rhythmic structures of some ġazal-songs, such as the following, can scarcely be said to be based upon the poetic meter.<sup>10</sup>

Example 1

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD-2399

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Kahervā

Meter: Muḡarīc<sup>c</sup> - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //



In this example, which is in no way atypical or "incorrect," the metrical feet are not aligned with the tāl, and there is no systematic differentiation between the long and short syllables, as is shown by the melismatic extension of "jo" in mm. 2-3, and the rhythmic regularity of the syllabic passage in m. 3, where long and short syllables alike are rendered in  $\frac{1}{4}$ -notes.

Nevertheless, in this performance, as in all ġazal-songs, some acknowledgment of the bahr, be it ingenuous or conscious, on the part of the artist is manifested by the regularity of the rhythmic treatments of the successive renderings of the various rhymed misra'cs to the melody of the sthāī. That is, in each rendering of the sthāī, regardless of which line is being sung, the above pattern of long and short syllables remains constant relative to the melody. Thus while a singer is free to set a lyric to any rhythmic scheme he deems suitable, he must have sufficient awareness of the general scansion in order

to perform lines correctly.

Moreover, some g̃azal-singers insist upon the importance of the bahr in their art; in a communication to the present writer, Anil Bisvās asserts, for example, that "Proper understanding of bahr or meter is another factor that plays a vital role in the rendering of g̃azals. A musician with an ear for the rhythmic pattern automatically chooses the correct musical rhythm," Likewise, Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān told the present writer that "One has to think of the natural meter as given in the g̃azal itself before composing, one has to see the first preference."

In fact, many g̃azal-songs do exhibit apodictic correlations between the bahr and the rhythm, and, as we have seen, the desirability of such correspondence is attested to by some singers. Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān demonstrated for this writer one example of ideal coordination between the two parameters:

Example 2a

Singer: Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān

Source: private tape

Poet: ?

Tāl: Rūpak

Meter: Ramal - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Shām-e-gham ku-ḥ, u-s ni-gāh-e-nā-z ki bā- ten ka-ro //

It will be observed that this meter, with its foot-structure of 2+1+2+1, is easily accommodated into Rūpak tāl (3+4); accordingly, in the above example, short syllables are consistently allotted half the time-value of long syllables (with the exception of the extended final vowel).

Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān then performed the same couplet in Dādrā, and in Kahervā, while maintaining the same general melodic and rhythmic structure:

Example 2b

Tāl: Dādrā

Shām-e-gham ku-ḥ, u-s ni-gāh-e-nā-z ki bā- ten ka-ro //

Example 2c

Tāl: Kahervā

Because the ideal rhythmic proportions are here altered, these two examples are considered by Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān inferior to the first, which, in his words, "reigns supreme, because it is completely in accordance with the actual flow of the meter."

In Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān's gāzals, typically syllabic rather than florid, the intrinsic influence of the bāhr is remarkable; the rhythms of many of his compositions can indeed be said to be based entirely upon the poetic meter. In this sense, his approach to gāzal-singing represents one extreme: that of close, even literal translation of the meter into musical rhythm.

Some meters, however, are not quite so easily accommodated into tāls as Ramal above into Rūpak. The bāhr of the following example has, like the Ramal above, seven "beats" per foot, but they are not distributed in congruence with the internal structure of Rūpak tāl.

Example 3

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2741

Poet: Mōmin

Tāl: Rūpak

Meter: Kāmil    ◡ - ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - ◡ - //

Again, each foot corresponds to one cycle of the tāl, with the exception that the postposition "mēn" ("in") of the second foot is sung in the first measure, presumably for the sake of greater proximity to its object, "tum" ("you"). The long syllables are consistently given greater time-values than are the short ones. The overall rhythm is, however, diffuse rather than regular, undoubtedly

because of the aforementioned incompatibility with the structure of the tāl, and also because of the undesirability of stressing the first (◡) syllables of the feet; here these syllables are qualitatively de-accented by delaying their appearance until after the accented first beat of each āvartan (cycle).

The setting of the following gāzal bears some similarities to the latter example:

Example 4

Singer: Mujāhid Ḥusain

Source: private tape

Poet: Faiẓ Aḥmad Faiẓ

Tāl: Dādrā

Meter: Muẓārī<sup>c</sup> - - ◡ / - ◡ - - / ◡ - - ◡ / - ◡ - //

Do-noī ja-hā- nā te- re, mo-hab-ba-tā meī hā- vā ke //

Although the meter of this gāzal is irregular and asymmetrical, the singer has rendered it more or less intact by, again, allotting one āvartan to each foot, and by consistently extending the long syllables. As the third foot commences with a short syllable [muḥabbat], the dynamic accentuation of which might seem inappropriate; its appearance is, as in example 14, so delayed that the accent of the āvartan is felt to be shifted to the fourth beat of the measure, upon the long syllable [-bat].

In the above examples, each metrical foot corresponds to one cycle of the tāl; however, in most gāzal-songs (45 out of 52 specimens transcribed), the feet are divided unevenly amongst the āvartans. Reasons for this include the frequent incompatibility of the syntactical structure of the misraʿ with its internal metric structure, the relative incongruence of a tripodic meter (e.g., example 9) with a four-measure sthāī, and a variety of purely musical factors, some of which we will examine below. In most gāzal-songs, the rhythm can be said to reflect the bahr only in the general accentuation of the long syllables and de-accentuation of the short ones.

Again, certain meters lend themselves naturally to accommodation into certain tāls. Ramal 16.1,<sup>11</sup> for example, fits Dādrā quite readily:

Ramal: ◡ ◡ - ◡ / - ◡ - - / ◡ ◡ - ◡ / - ◡ - - //

Dādrā  $\frac{6}{4}$ :

The following setting illustrates this rhythmic arrangement:

Example 5

Singer: Nainā Dēvī

Source: private tape

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Dādrā

Yeh na thī ha-mā-rī qis-mat, kevi-sāl-e-yā- rō ho-tā //

Similarly, the meter of example 3 above, which was seen to be apparently incongruent with the internal structure of Rūpak tāl, can in fact be rendered compatible by shifting the tāl forward two syllables:

Kamil:    ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - //

Rūpak  $\frac{7}{4}$ :    | | | | | | |

This is essentially the pattern employed in Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān's setting of the gāzal:

Example 6

Singer: Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān

Source: private tape

Poet: Mōmin

Tāl: Rūpak

Meter: Kāmil    ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - / ◡ - ◡ - //

Vo jo ham meñ tum, meñ qa-rā-rō thā, tum-keñ yā- dō ho ke na yā- dō ho //

In fact, most meters can, with some slight rhythmic adjustments, be made to fit at least one of the appropriate tāls quite naturally (cf. also examples 7 and 16 below).

The rhythmic structures of the following two settings of a well-known gāzal of Ghālib are basically identical. While the opening long syllables of

the first and third feet are, in terms of time-value, rhythmically equivalent to the short syllables immediately following them, they are nevertheless qualitatively accented by their position on the first beat (the sam) of the cycle.

Example 7a

Singer: Ḥafīz Aḥmad Khān

Source: private tape

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Dādrā

Meter: Razaj - 0 0 - / 0 0 - / - 0 0 - / 0 0 - //

Dil hī to hai, na sang-o-khishī, dar-dī se bhar, na ā- e kyon //

Example 7b

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2399

Dil hī to hai, na sang-o-khishī, dar-dī se bhar, na ā- e kyon //

In the preceding examples, we have seen some of the variety of approaches to gāzal-singing. As we have noted, in some sthāis, the bahr is not reflected in any substantial way; in others, particularly in settings more syllabic than melismatic, differentiation between long and short syllables does occur. Finally, the rhythms of some settings can indeed be said to be based entirely on the poetic meter. On account of the absence of a codified theory and a homogeneous stylistic aesthetic of gāzal-singing, no one approach can be singled out as "correct" at the expense of another. One can only note that certain gāzals as performed by certain artists exhibit certain kinds of correspondence between meter and rhythm; this correspondence may be the result of design, or it may in some cases be fortuitous. Probably in most instances of correspondence, the bahr simply suggests to the composer a certain suitable rhythmic setting, such that the meter becomes an aid to composition rather than an artificial and alien hindrance.

The next question that arises is: what are the factors responsible for the

alteration or distortion of the meter in its musical setting.

#### IV. Phrasing and Meaning

The influence of the meaning of the text upon phrasing is frequently responsible for the alteration of the meter in singing. While, as we have noted, the light-classical ġazal-song is not dominated by the text to the extent that tarannum is, the ġazal-singer's primary intent remains the musical expression and enhancement of the meaning of the words.<sup>12</sup> In a communication to the present writer, Anil Bisvās asserts: "Proper punctuation must play a very important part. The words are delicately balanced in a line and incorrect punctuation can completely obliterate the meaning and blunt the impact." He illustrates his point with the following couplet:

Meter: Hazaj    ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - //

[kinārōñ sē mujhē aē nā-xudā]ō dūr rahnē dō  
◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - //

(there      carry      tempest      whence      is rising)

vahāñ lē-kar calō tūfāñ jahāñ sē uthnē vālā hai]  
◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - / ◡ - - - //

Oh, captain, keep me far from the shores,

Take me there, whence the tempest is rising.

If the bahr is "mechanically employed" (i.e., if pauses are taken between feet), "the second line will be broken after 'tūfāñ,' rendering 'tūfāñ' a vocative, which it is not." That is, the line would read. "Oh tempest, take me there where it (?) is rising." Since ġazals, for their condensation and stylized syntax, are often difficult to comprehend even for the native speakers, the singer should not obscure the meaning any further in his rendering. Rather, he is "often obliged to strike a compromise between the requirements of the words and the metric dissection and emphasis" (Bisvās in a personal communication to the present author).

Of course, not all singers take punctuation so seriously as do purists like Bisvās; in fact, he was inspired to employ the above shī'r to demonstrate his point only after hearing a renowned female singer render the second line "incorrectly."<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, in most ġazal-songs, meaning appears to be an impor-

tant determinant of phrasing. Particularly in the antarā portions, in lines where syntactical and metrical structures are incongruent, singers tend to phrase their improvisations in conformity with the former, at the expense of the latter.

#### V. Iambic Phrasing

Quite an important factor in the alteration of the meter is the tendency of phrases to form iambs. This common musical tendency has been noted in the Persian āvāz<sup>14</sup> and in tarannum.<sup>15</sup> In gāzal-singing, iambic phrasing can be said to occur on two levels: in the overall structure of the delivery of the misra<sup>c</sup>, whether in the antarā or the sthāī; and in smaller, semi-cadential phrases within a misra<sup>c</sup>, particularly at the beginning.

Antarā portions of many gāzal-songs can be said to resemble āvāz improvisations in that their phrases often commence syllabically or neumatically and conclude melismatically; such phrases can be said to have an overall iambic structure in that the syllabic portions, because of their relative rapidity and limited melodic activity, are perceived as being musically less accented than the florid, melismatic sections. Mehdī Ḥasan's rendering of the first misra<sup>c</sup> of the couplet below illustrates this phenomenon:

[zīna ṣabā kā dhūndtī hai apnī musht-e xāk  
 bām-e baland yār kahē āstāna kyā]

The fistful of dust seeking its ladder of wind,  
 How can the beloved call her upper balcony a doorway?

Here it will be noted that the first words of the opening misra<sup>c</sup> are delivered syllabically; melismas occur either on the final words, or on the meaningless syllable [a].

#### Example 8

Singer: Mehdī Ḥasan

Poet: Ātish

Meter: Muḏārī<sup>c</sup>

Source: private tape

Tāl: Dādrā

- - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Zi-ne sa-bā kā dhūn- d-tī hai  
 Zi-ne sā-bā kā dhūn- d-tī hai a-p-ne muš- t-e-khā-  
 Zi-ne sa-ba kā dhūn- d-tī hai a-p-ne muš- t-e-khā

This antara, like those of most gāzal-songs, differs from āvāz in that although most melismas occur on long syllables, here the bahr appears to be an insignificant determinant of phrasing. Instead, phrases are structured according to meaning; thus, pauses occur after the postpositional phrase "zīna sabā kā" (lit., "ladder of wind"), and after "dhūndtī hai" ("seeks," completing an independent clause).

Many sthāis, such as the following, manifest overall iambic structure in their progression from syllabic to melismatic text delivery.

Example 9

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2399

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Kahervā

Meter: Xafīf - - - - / - - - - / - - - - //

ko-umm- I- dā bhar na-hīn ,ā- tī

Example 10 (cf. example 8, above)

Sun to ga-hīh jā hān men hai te-rā farsā na kyā

The following sthāī can be said to consist of two iambic phrases (divided by the quarter-rest in m. 3), each concluding melodically. Here the bahr is altered quite radically in that the two phrases do not correspond to the metrical feet, and also in that the short syllable "hai" is melodically extended.

Example 11

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2741

Poet: Ātish

Tāl: Dādrā

Meter: Muḏārī<sup>c</sup> - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Iambics are most conspicuous in the innumerable sthāīs commencing with a short, tuneful phrase which cadences on the sam of the following āvartan. This "catch" phrase is identical in form and function to the mukhrā of classical music, and the term is used accordingly by gāzal-singers. Literally meaning "face," in musical parlance "mukhrā" denotes a precomposed, easily recognizable phrase which, whether in xayāl, thumrī, dhrupad, or gāzal, serves to: (1) commence the composition (bandish), and/or (2) to punctuate or conclude a metered section of improvisation. Because the mukhrā leads to and cadences definitively on the sam of the tāl, it can be said to situate an iamb. In the sthāīs below, I have highlighted the opening iambic mukhrās by adding, beneath the bahr, a scansion based on purely musical factors.<sup>16</sup>

Example 12

Singer: Anil Bisvās

Source: private tape

Poet: Anvar

Tāl: Dādrā

Meter: Ramal - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Example 13

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2741

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Kahervā

Meter: Xafīf - - - / - - - / - - - //

Ibn-e-ma-ri-am      hū-ā ka-re      ko-ī      //

The rhythmic structures of some sthāis can be regarded as a series of iambs:

Example 14

Singer: Mujāhid Husain

Source: private tape

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Dādrā

Meter: Ramal - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Bas-ke dū-s-vā-rō hai ha-rō kā-mō kā ā-sā-n , ho- nā      //

Example 15

Singer: Mehdi Hasan

Source: private tape

Poet: ?

Tāl: Kahervā

Meter: Mutaqārib - - - / - - - / - - - / - - - //

Mu-jhe tum, na-zar se      girā to, na-he      ho, mu-jhe tum ka-bhī bhī      //

Bhu-lā      na, sa-ko-ge      //

In general, sthāis with iambic commencements are extremely common (cf. also examples 5, 6, 9 above and 17 below). The stress patterns of their iambs may or may not reflect the meter; in the examples above, certain long syllables (marked "a") are treated as unstressed upbeats. In example 15, on the other hand, the correspondence between the bahr and the rhythmic iambs is remarkable.

A final noteworthy factor in the alteration of the bahr is the tendency of singers to extend frequently by melisma syllables containing the vowel [ā]. In classical vocal music, vistār (free-rhythmic melodic improvisation) and tāns (fast melodic runs) are usually performed to this vowel; similarly, in gāzal-singing, while tāns are often performed on other vowels, the monophthong [ā] is by far the most common locus of melismatic extension. The following sthāis (as well as examples 9, 10, and 11 above) are typical in this respect.<sup>17</sup>

Example 16

Singer: Bēgam Akhtar

Source: EMI:ECSD 2399

Poet: Ghālib

Tāl: Kahervā

Meter: Ramal - ♩ - - / ♪ - - / ♪ - //

Phir mu-jhē dī- de tarā yā- d'ā- yā- //

Example 17

Singer: Ghulām 'Alī

Source: Oscar: Pika 5

Poet: Iqbāl (?)

Tāl: Dadrā

Meter: Ramal - ♩ - - / ♪ - - / ♩ - - / - - //

ko-r sam- jhā-eni kyā rangā hai mai khā-ne kā- //

//

## NOTES

Findings presented in this paper are the product of research conducted in Delhi in 1976-77; I am indebted to the various teachers and artists who assisted me. The reader interested in further study of ghazal-singing may refer to my M.A. thesis "The Light-Classical Urdu Ghazal-Song" (University of California Los Angeles, 1979).

<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive discussion of tarannum is found in Regula Qureshi, "Tarannum: The Chanting of Urdu Poetry," Ethnomusicology, 13, No. 3 (1969), 425-68.

<sup>2</sup> For a more thorough discussion of the Urdu meters, see M. A. R. Barker et al., A Reader of Classical Urdu Poetry (Ithaca, N. Y.: Spoken Language Service, 1977), vol. i, pp. xxxv-ff; T. G. Bailey, "A Guide to the Meters of Urdu Verse," Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, 9, No. 4 (1939); and D. J. Matthews and C. Shackle, An Anthology of Classical Urdu Love Lyrics (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 210-12.

<sup>3</sup> See G-n'ichi Tsuge, "Rhythmic Aspects of Āvāz in Persian Music," Ethnomusicology, 14 No. 2 (1970), 207.

<sup>4</sup> Some modern poets take marked liberties with regard to meter.

<sup>5</sup> The source of this chart is T. G. Bailey, for which see Qureshi, p. 429.

<sup>6</sup> Persian and Urdu prosody, it will be recalled, are more or less identical.

<sup>7</sup> See Qureshi, p. 439.

<sup>8</sup> The thekās (skeletal structures) of these tāls are roughly as follows:

Dādrā:            dhā dhīn nā / dhā tīn nā  
Kahervā:        dhā ge tīn nā / tā ge dhīn nā  
Rūpak:           tīn tīn nā / dhīn nā dhīn nā

<sup>9</sup> Qureshi, p. 442.

10 All transcriptions have been transposed to the "key" of C, such that that note is to be taken as the tonic and finalis.

11 See T. G. Bailey, "A Guide to the Meters of Urdu verse," pp. 696-85.

12 See Naina Devi, "Thumri Gayaki and Other Allied Forms," in Rāg-Rang Presents Naz-o-Ada (New Delhi, 1975), p. 10.

13 It has been suggested that because an elite audience composed of Urdu cognoscenti might not have difficulty in understanding a couplet sung without "proper" semantic punctuation, that therefore they would not consider such a rendering anomalous. Literati such as Bisvās, however, would argue that a singer's disregard of syntax reflects an inattention to the meaning of the shīr and, by extension, a superficial approach to the art.

14 See Tsuge, pp. 220-ff.

15 See Qureshi, pp. 440-41.

16 After Cooper, for which see Grosvenor W. Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, The Rhythmic Structure of Music (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

17 While naturally the placement of vowels relative to the melody of the sthāī varies from misraʿ to misraʿ, it may be assumed that sthāīs are generally composed with the matlaʿ in mind.

The inevitable effect of such melismas upon the bahr is the disproportionate extension of certain syllables which, although necessarily scanned long, would be less prolonged in a more literal rendering of the meter.

## VI. Conclusions

In gāzal-singing there occurs the confluence of an Islamic, Near-Eastern system of prosody with an Indian musical tradition which, although influenced in the past by Middle-Eastern music, is stylistically quite distinct from the latter. Some of the diversity in North Indian classical music is reflected in the various forms this intersection assumes--that is, in the various approaches to relating meter and rhythm. Naturally, the bahr may be said to play a more important role in the compositional aspect of gāzal-singing than in improvisation. Certain singers tend to derive the rhythms of their sthāis more or less directly from the bahr. Judging, however, from the frequently weak correlation between bahr and rhythm in most specimens, it appears that most singers would find such an approach confining, and even mechanical.

The bahr frequently is reflected in the rhythm, whether by the alignment of each metrical foot with a cycle of the tāl, or, more often, by the systematic stressing of long syllables. Still, vowel placement, syntactical structure, and the tendency to form iambs often occasion some extent of distortion of the meter, particularly in the more improvised antara.

Iambic phrasing is remarkably widespread in North Indian music, figuring conspicuously not only in gāzal-songs, but also in classical instrumental and vocal compositions, the structures of most tāls, and in the invariable anticipation and stressing of the sam of a rhythmic cycle. An inquiry into the manifestations of this fundamental tendency in North Indian music and its psychological foundations would prove an interesting study which might shed some light on the music of other cultures as well.