

# Traditions Of The Mushoara Genre In The Works Of Sayfi Sarayi

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**Abstract:** Literature is one of the highest manifestations of human thought, aesthetic sensibility, and spiritual life. In the cultural heritage of every nation, literature occupies a special place, and classical literature, in particular, represents an invaluable treasury. Among the various genres formed within classical literature, the mushoara genre stands out for its distinctive artistic and aesthetic features, its spirit of creative competition, and its high regard for poetry. This genre served not only as a means for poets to demonstrate their artistic mastery, but also as a platform for testing the depth of their thought, richness of vocabulary, level of literary knowledge, and creative potential. Mushoara gatherings were commonly held at literary assemblies, royal courts, and creative circles, and they were regarded as significant cultural events of their time. This article examines the role and artistic-aesthetic characteristics of the mushoara genre in the works of Sayfi Sarayi, one of the prominent representatives of fourteenth-century classical Turkic literature. In the course of the study, the formal and thematic features of the genre are analyzed through examples of mushoaras included by Sayfi Sarayi in his translation of Sa'di Shirazi's Gulistan. In particular, the use of poetic devices such as meter, rhyme, radif, simile, metaphor, and tajnis, as well as the harmony of mystical and amorous themes in mushoaras conducted with poets such as Mawlana Qazi Muhsin, Mawlana Ishaq, Mawlana Imad Mawlavi, and Ahmad Khoja al-Sarayi, is examined on a scholarly basis. The article reveals the role of the mushoara genre in fostering creative competition, literary dialogue, and the continuity of artistic traditions. The findings demonstrate that Sayfi Sarayi's mushoaras constitute an important source reflecting the literary milieu of the fourteenth century and play a significant role in the development of the mushoara genre within classical Turkic literature.

**Keywords:** Sayfi Sarayi; mushoara; classical literature; Sufism; ghazal; artistic tradition; fourteenth-century literature.

**Introduction:** The formation, development, and refinement of the mushoara genre in classical literature are closely associated with the works of many prominent poets. In particular, Sayfi Sarayi incorporated into his translation of Sa'di Shirazi's Gulistan the mushoaras he conducted with poets of his time. The mushoaras of fourteenth-century poets begin on page 179 of this manuscript. This section contains poems written by Sayfi Sarayi in response to the ghazals of contemporaneous poets such as Mawla Qazi Muhsin, Mawlana Ishaq, Mawlana Imad Mawlavi, Ahmad Khoja al-Sarayi, Khwarazmi, Abdulmajid, Tug'li Khoja, and Hasan o'g'li, as well as one ghazal by Khojami and thirteen ghazals by Sayfi Sarayi himself (Sarayi, 1968, p. 5). What distinguishes these ghazal-based mushoaras from other forms of mushoara is that

the poets did not compose their works simultaneously. Rather, Sarayi deliberately selected them in order to represent the literary environment of his period and to establish literary connections. In composing mushoaras in response to these ghazals, he paid close attention to their ideological content and formal traditions. By adopting a particular approach to classical rhyme and radif, he created the impression that the mushoaras were composed at the same time. The following ideological and aesthetic analysis of the mushoara provides practical confirmation of these observations.

**"Mawlana Qazi Muhsin says:"**

Sevdugum ban odamiylar jonidur,

Qomu xublar xubining sultonidur.

The object of the poet's love is not mere physical

beauty, but rather the spirit of humanity and its inner essence. Here, humaneness, moral purity, and spiritual perfection are presented as the true objects of love. In classical literature, the concept of the “soul” (jon) is often interpreted as a symbol of divine light and spiritual truth. The word khub means “beautiful,” yet the poet acknowledges the highest beauty among all beauties — not external attractiveness, but the sovereignty of spiritual and moral beauty. In classical poetry, the symbol of the “sultan” denotes the highest rank and perfection. When we analyze classical poetic works from an artistic perspective, we frequently encounter representations of Sufi ideas. This couplet is likewise composed within the framework of Sufi tradition. In Sufism, the soul is regarded as a particle of divine truth, a light bestowed upon the human being by God as “spirit.” What renders the poet a lover is not the physical appearance of the beloved, but the divine light within them. This interpretation is closely related to the Sufi concept of *ishq-i haqiqi* (true love), which signifies attaining God through humanity. In the second hemistich, khub again refers not to outward beauty but to the beauty of truth itself. The expression “the sultan of all beauties” points to the ultimate source and highest form of beauty — the divine جمال (jamal), that is, God’s beauty. Thus, the poet’s beloved is the divine light manifested within humanity, which is regarded as the sovereign of all beauty.

**In the same meter and rhyme, Sayfi Sarayi says:**

Ul yuzi oykim, jahonning jonidur,

Bu zamona xublarining xonidur.

The poet compares the beloved’s face to the moon. This is one of the most frequent similes in classical poetry, where the moon symbolizes beauty, light, and purity. By calling the beloved’s face “the soul of the world,” it is portrayed as a source of life for the entire universe. Through this hyperbole, the beauty of the beloved is elevated to the level of a universal value. Following Qazi Muhsin’s poetic model, Sayfi expresses the beloved’s beauty in the highest possible terms, depicting it as the greatest and most sovereign among all beauties. This artistic exaggeration raises the beloved’s beauty to the rank of a sultan.

Mushoaras are composed not only in formal correspondence but also in ideological harmony. That is, Qazi Muhsin’s ghazal, which opens the mushoara with a Sufi-oriented *matla’*, inspires Sayfi creatively. The presence of Sufi imagery in Sayfi’s couplet indicates that the mushoara continues coherently on the level of meaning. In Sufism, the moon is a symbol of divine light; therefore, the comparison of the beloved’s face to the moon signifies the reflection of divine beauty (*jamal al-Haqq*) within it. The expression “the soul of

the world,” in a spiritual interpretation, denotes that God’s light is the life-giving force of the entire cosmos. Thus, the beloved’s face is understood as a manifestation of divine truth. The phrase “the lord of beauties” points to the idea that the source of all beauty is God’s جمال, and that the beloved’s beauty is one of its manifestations, exercising dominion over all other forms of beauty.

Sarayi’s mushoaras represent a poetic tradition in classical Turkic literature that harmonizes beauty, love, and Sufi spirituality. In his couplets, amorous emotions move from metaphor toward truth — that is, the aspiration for God is expressed through human beauty. While translating the *Gulistan*, Sayfi Sarayi includes a number of examples of mushoaras, which feature prominent representatives of fourteenth-century poetry (Sarayi, 1968, p. 6).

**Mawlana Ishaq says:**

Nazar qil bizga bir soat, ayo mahbubi ruhoni

Aningdek bizni xush ko’r kim bekansun ahli ruh oni

It is evident that the mushoara is constructed entirely upon a Sufi conceptual foundation. When the poet says, “Turn your gaze upon us for a moment,” he asks for a brief moment of attention from the spiritual beloved — that is, from divine love or from the *murshid* (spiritual master). In Sufi doctrine, this reflects the disciple’s expectation of the master’s gaze, through which the spiritual energy necessary for inner perfection is transmitted.

The expression “spiritual beloved” (*mahbub-i ruhani*) carries a dual meaning: (1) on the divine level, the true Beloved is God; (2) on the Sufi level, it refers to the *pir* or *murshid*, the spiritual guide. The phrase “regard us with favor in that way” expresses the poet’s wish to be counted among the “people of the spirit,” that is, those who have attained spiritual purity. This reflects the desire to join the Sufi community and to reach inner purification.

The central idea of the couplet is the aspiration for spiritual perfection and the request for divine attention. The poet sees himself as a humble servant, yet longs to belong to the ranks of the spiritually purified. This is a core theme of Sufi literature, expressing the human longing for closeness to God.

The scholarly-theoretical analysis of the couplet shows that Mawlana Ishaq artistically expresses the fundamental principles of Sufi lyricism — the yearning for divine attention, the pursuit of spiritual purification, and the disciple’s address to the spiritual master. This couplet is characteristic of the Sufi lyric genre in classical literature and is composed in harmony with the traditions of Navoiy and Jami.

**In that meter and rhyme, Sayfi Sarayi says:**

Taolalloh zehi surat zeri mahbubi ravhoni,

Kim oning husni shavhinda ko'ngullar bo'ldi nuroni.

Sayfi Sarayi's couplet is both thematically and formally aligned with Mawlana Ishaq's verse, embodying the traditions of Sufi lyricism in classical literature. It artistically expresses the ideas of divine beauty and spiritual perfection through poetic devices.

The phrase "Taolalloh zehi surat" carries a tone of divine praise. The poet associates the image of the beloved (i.e., the spiritual beloved, a symbol of divine beauty) with the majesty of God. This is a reference to the Sufi concept of *jamal* (beauty).

"Mahbubi ravhani" refers to the spiritual beloved — the beauty of the Truth or, in the Sufi sense, the image of the *pir* (spiritual guide).

The line "Kim oning husni shavhinda ko'ngullar bo'ldi nuroni" expresses that the beloved's beauty and passion have illuminated hearts with light. This corresponds to the Sufi notion of the "illumination of the heart."

Simile and metaphor are used as the beloved's beauty is compared to "light." This symbolizes the divine beauty enlightening the heart in Sufi thought.

Allusion: The word "light" (*nur*) alludes to the Quranic verse describing God as "the Light of the heavens and the earth" (Surah An-Nur, 24:35).

Antithesis: The contrast between "surat" (the outward form) and "ravhani" (the spiritual essence) adds artistic strength to the verse.

As demonstrated, Sayfi Sarayi's *mushoaras* are created based on classical literary traditions, their genre characteristics, and the rules of *mushoara*. Such *mushoaras* reveal the literary era and the creative mastery of poets to the reader. Through Sayfi's *mushoaras*, it becomes evident that Sufi literature was widespread in the fourteenth-century literary environment, with Sufi ideas flourishing and deeply permeating artistic literature.

**Mawlana Imad Mawlavi says:**

Dilbarim nechaga men qulin qinda tutar,

Men qilichmuman, ajabkim meni ul qinda tutar.

The poet describes himself as the "servant" of the beloved. In Sufi literature, this symbolizes the disciple's absolute submission to the *pir* (spiritual guide) and the devotee's complete surrender to the Truth (God). The sword represents power, strength, and influence, while the sheath (*qin*) symbolizes the restraining and regulating force. The poet likens himself to a sharp sword, yet this power is powerless before the will of the

beloved, as he is always confined within the sheath.

The word "Ajabkim" expresses the lover's inner amazement. Despite perceiving himself as strong, the poet remains under the beloved's control. This conveys the power of love through artistic exaggeration.

The ideological and artistic essence of the couplet lies in the fact that the lover's strength and power are powerless before the beloved's will. No matter how sharp the sword, it is useless without permission to be drawn.

In accordance with classical poetic traditions, Sufi ideas are also reflected in this *mushoara*. The divine relationships between the Truth and the human, disciple and *pir*, are expressed through Sufi terminology, which enhances the artistic nature of the *mushoara*.

**In the same meter and rhyme, Sayfi Sarayi says:**

Bu falak nechun meni doim qara qinda tutar,

Bu otim Sayf o'ldug'uchunmi qara, qinda tutar.

In classical literature, *falak* (the sky or celestial sphere) is often depicted as a force that determines human fate and subjects individuals to trials. The poet's lament, "Why does this *falak* always keep me in the black sheath?" perfectly fits the classical genre of complaining about *falak*. In this genre, poets explain their sufferings in life as the injustice of fate or the heavens.

The poet artistically transforms his name—Sayf (meaning "sword")—into a literary symbol. Although a sword naturally symbolizes war, power, and strength, when confined within its sheath, it cannot demonstrate its might. The *falak* here holds it in a "black sheath," limiting its potential. This wordplay related to the poet's name is a common stylistic device in classical literature.

The sword symbolizes power, strength, and courage.

The sheath symbolizes limitation, concealment, and obstruction of potential.

The black sheath symbolizes darkness, misfortune, and the injustice of *falak*.

The couplet illustrates human powerlessness in the face of destiny. The poet states that he should be strong and powerful like a sword, yet *falak* keeps him in a "black sheath"—within darkness and limitation. Through this, the poet expresses the idea of injustice in life and the inability of a person to fully realize their capabilities.

The *mushoara* maintains a balanced meter and rhyme; the phrase "keeps me in the black sheath" is repeated twice, enhancing the musicality. The pun related to the poet's name adds distinctiveness to the verse.

Philosophically, the couplet portrays the struggle between man and fate, reflecting the poet's inner torment through artistic imagery.

In conclusion, this couplet is a perfect example of Sayfi Sarayi's expression of his suffering before fate and the symbolic representation of human strength and potential being constrained by falak through artistic means.

The development of literary types and genres is generally linked to the progress of progressive literary movements, and the creative works of great masters often play a significant role in this development [O. Nosirov, 1979:3]. Therefore, Sayfi Sarayi's mushoaras hold an important place in the literature of the fourteenth century.

### Ahmad Khoja as-Sarayi

Dilbarimning ul sadafteki og'zida dur bor erur.

La'lining shavqinda tun-kun diydalar dur-bor erur.

Unlike the mushoaras mentioned above, this mushoara depicts the theme of earthly love. The couplet praises the beloved's beauty and the power of her influence. The mouth is compared to a shell (sadaf), and the words spoken are likened to pearls (dur, or pearls). Through this simile, the beloved's speech, voice, and even her smile are expressed as precious and beautiful as invaluable pearls.

In the second hemistich, the passion of the ruby-red lips (lal) is described. The allure of these lips is so strong that the lover's eyes shed tears day and night. Here, the sufferings of love and the power of affection are portrayed.

This mushoara is a classical example of amorous lyricism, in which the beloved's beauty is exalted through the symbols of pearls and rubies. At the same time, the lover's tears point to the painful aspects of love. As a result, the couplet artistically expresses the harmony of beauty and suffering with artistic perfection.

### In the same meter and rhyme, Sayfi Sarayi says:

Dilbarimning zulfi sunbul chehrasi gulzor erur,

Bo'yina oshiq sanavbar yuzina gul zor erur.

Sayfi Sarayi begins with the exact form of Ahmad Khoja's matla'. The creative purpose is to establish the praise of the beloved as the foundation of the mushoara. Both poets adhere to this tradition. The couplet offers a portrayal of the beloved. The poet expresses the beloved's beauty through images of nature. The hair is compared to wheat ears (sunbul), a symbol of beauty, fertility, and vital energy. The face is likened to a flower garden (gulzor), which not only signifies diversity and beauty but also joy and freshness

of life. The stature is compared to the cypress tree (sanavbar), traditionally a symbol of height, dignity, and strength. The face is equated to the most beautiful flowers in the garden, highlighting the beauty and charm concentrated in the beloved's visage.

The musicality and harmony of the couplet are noticeable: the words "sunbul – gulzor – sanavbar – gulzor" come together in harmony, creating the internal rhythm of the poem. The poet's choice of natural imagery to describe the beloved's beauty is characteristic of Eastern poetry.

The overall idea of the couplet is that the beloved's beauty is equated with the most beautiful scenes of nature, with each feature symbolizing a distinct aspect of beauty.

In Sayfi Sarayi's work, the mushoara genre holds a special place due to its historical and cultural significance. This genre developed primarily as traditional literary gatherings, encompassing creative dialogue and literary competitions among poets. The mushoara genre is distinguished by its many participants and its combination of various poetic forms and styles.

The mushoaras in Sayfi Sarayi's oeuvre served not only as literary entertainment but also as a means to continue cultural heritage and disseminate new creative ideas. The mushoara genre secured a strong position in national literature and has been further developed by contemporary poets. Today, new forms of this genre are evolving to meet modern demands while remaining faithful to their historical traditions, making mushoara an essential and distinctive part of Uzbek literature.

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