

# The Interpretation of the Gulshani Raz by M. Shabistari in the World Literature

<sup>1</sup>Khaliyeva Gulnoz Iskandarovna , <sup>2</sup>Nasirov Abdurakhim Abdimutalipovich ,  
<sup>3</sup>Mannonova Feruzabonu Sheraliqizi , <sup>4</sup>Karimov Ulugbek Nusratovich , <sup>5</sup>Adambaeva  
Nargiza Kadambayeva

<sup>1</sup> professor, doctor of science in philology, Uzbekistan State World languages University

Orchid code: 0000-0001-5013-0792

<sup>2</sup>Professor, doctor of Philological Science - Director of the Uzbek and foreign languages teaching Center,  
Tashkent State University of Economics, . .

<sup>3</sup>senior teacher, the department of integrated course of English language,  
English language faculty 3, Uzbekistan State World languages University

Orchid code: 0000-0003-2173-4698

<sup>4</sup> associated professor, Philosophy Doctor in philology, the department of integrated course of  
English language, English language faculty 3,  
Uzbekistan State World languages University

<sup>5</sup>senior researcher of the innovative project, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies

**Abstract.** The current article discusses the varieties of translation of the work, main information about the poem and special peculiarities of word usage between original work and interpreted one. The study covers the bright examples of translation work of the Gulshan I Raz by several translator in chronological order within the background information on the publications and interpreters respectively. It is noticeable that each translator started their work by giving definition for special terminology of Sufism or Islamic culture. In the article reader can comprehend how the work was translated and in what way interpreters managed to approach to the work in ideological, philosophical and linguistic way.

**Key words:** Sufism, Islamic culture, poems, theology, Persian literature, existence-nonexistence relations, spiritual knowledge.

**Introduction.** The Gulshani Raz, the work by Shabistari composed in A.D. 1317 as the answers to fifteen questions to doctrines of Sufis. the work was also called Muhammadan Mystics [1]. He composed Gulshan-irāz in 717/1317 as a response to questions sent by Amir HusaynīHarawī, a well-respected Sufi of the Suhrawardiyya order and a poet who was active in Herat and exemplified “Sufi humility” in his words and manners. From a poetic point of view, not all the lines of Gulshan-irāz have the same quality and it is obvious that conveying the intended message is the poet’s priority [4].

The existence-nonexistence relations problem is the central concept in the Sufi ontology. The poem “The Secret Rose Garden” by MakhmudShabistari like the most of the Sufi philosophy masterpieces describes the ontology problematic in the same terms. The Universe divides on the Absolute existence and relative existence, that correspond with the world and the ‘ayanthabita (objects of the empiric world, present in God and not-different among each other). It’s relativity appears in the ambivalence of the existence and non-existence. Each of them can correspond with the world and the ‘ayanthabita. Absolute Being unites the system incorporating the whole

universe. This ontology system was natural for the Iranian Sufism and nontrivial for the Arabic one, so the research opens the perspectives for the comparative studies [6].

**Theoretical Framework.** The work is also called one of the forgotten books as well as mentioned in E. H. Whinfield in the translation. The first European authors to notice the Gulshani Raz were the travellers Chardin and Bernier, circ. 1700, both of whom describe it as the Summa theology of the Sufis. In the course of the eighteenth century several copies of the poem found their way to the great European libraries [1].

Before English translation, the work was translated into Latin, German. In 1821 Dr. Tholuck, of Berlin, published a few extracts from it, with Latin translations, in his *Sufismus*, and in 1825 a German translation of about one-third of the entire poem in his *“Bliithensammlungauss der Morgenlandischen Mystik.”* In 1838 Von Hammer-Purgstall published the Persian text, based on the Berlin and the Vienna Manuscripts, along with a German verse translation and a few notes from Lahiji's commentary [15]. Lāhijī wrote several treatises on Sufi themes in both prose and verse but his most famous work is the commentary on Gulshan-irāz, titled as *Mafātih al-irāz* that is written in an accessible Persian prose. For each line of the poem, Lāhijī explains both the denotations of difficult words and elucidates those terms that have philosophical or Sufi connotations. He then proceeds to analyze and interpret the content of the verse [8]. On the authority of this MS. several couplets omitted by Hammer have been restored, several repetitions retrenched, and various erroneous readings corrected. ‘All the alterations made have been indicated in the margin, and none have been made without MS. authority. Hammer's readings are marked H; those of the Midnapore MS., L. and others, given in the commentary or in the Calcutta copy, MSS. The translation has been made as close to the original as possible, Lahiji's renderings, as given in his paraphrase, being strictly followed throughout.

It is remarkable to notice that Leipzig also published a German poetic translation of the poem by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstahl [3]. The edition also included a Persian text and Lahiji's commentary. The book was accompanied by a translator's preface, a brief biography of Shabistari, and general information on Sufism. The same Persian text was revised and supplemented by several manuscripts found by Hammer. It was published by Whinfield A.H. in Calcutta in 1876. and republished in 1978[1]. In England it was republished with an English translation, commentary and foreword by Whinfield A.H. and this translation is considered the best English translation of the poem[7].

Along with it, there is another English translation of *The Flower Garden of the Secret*, accomplished by Johnson Edward Armstrong and published in 1887 in Trubner press in London. Likely, the work was published with the selections from Rubaiyat as J.E. Armstrong also dedicated other Sufi literature and addressed to Omar Khayyam's Rubaiyat. He evaluated as the culturally important artifact even though it contains blank pages and poor pictures inside, it has priceless morality towards universe and religious mystical poetry. This edition is under USA domain keeping original copyright references [10].

The third great translation work made by Johnson-Pasha and published in London, together with the rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in 1969[5]. He claims “Shabistari's Secret Rose Garden must be reckoned among the greatest mystical poetry of any time or land. Treating such themes as the Self and the One, The Spiritual Journey, Time and this Dream-World, and the ecstasy of Divine Inebriation, Shabistari's work is a perennial witness to the capabilities and destiny of humanity. Stressing the One Light that exists at the heart of all religious traditions, Shabistari's work is one of the clearest and most concise guides to the inner meaning of Sufism, and offers a stunningly direct exposition of Sufi mystical thought in poetic form” [10].

Later in 1920, Lederer translated *The Flower Garden of Mystery* into English, but, unlike previous authors, he did not just translate, but collected separate sayings of Shabistari about movement, time, Christianity and idolatry, about real and unreal, good and evil, about Sufi metaphor. In 1959, in Paris, the poem *Gulshan-i Raz* was translated into French[2]. The first critical edition of *The Flower Garden of Mystery*, based on material from 10 different manuscripts, was published in Tehran by Javad Nurbakhsh in 1975.

There are also translations of “*The Flower Garden of Mystery*” into Urdu, Turkish, Azerbaijani, German, French, English, Russian. Of the translations into English, the most famous is the translation of the poem, made by Whinfield in the second half of the 19th century. It turned out to be so successful that for many years it closed

the issue of re-translating the poem into English. Winfield's work is a brilliant philological translation based on Muhammad Lahiji's most authoritative commentary on the poem [9].

In 2007, another translation of the poem into English was published by Robert Abdullah Hay Darr, who had studied Sufism and Islamic miniature for many years in various parts of the Islamic world. Unlike other translators, Robert Abdul Hayy Darr's entry into Sufism literature was completely different [11]. I can say that he first got acquainted with Sufi life and Islamic culture, not just literature. Robert Darr was born in 1951 in the United States. In the 1970s, he met Idris Sha's works based on Sufism and traveled to Afghanistan in 1985-90. he went from journey to journey in search of food for himself. During the past years, R. Darr respects Afghans for all their traditions, but when Afghans criticize him, they point out that he is a Muslim and does not know about the works or literature of Islam. at the same time, he starts studying the Qur'an, and the natives start calling him Abdul Hayy. at that time, he met Khaliloh Khalili, a representative of Afghan literature, and the poet showed him a number of examples of Sufi literature. Robert Abdul hayy Darr translates not only Gulshani Raz but also many other works based on the ideology of Islam and Sufism [12]. His love for Sufism did not affect his way of life. He has been a scholar of Islamic culture for over 45 years and has just finished writing his autobiographical work, *The Spy of the Heart*. This translation has great elegance, although it falls short of Winfield's translation in accuracy. There are also a number of retellings of the poem in English that are of no value for academic research.

**Methodology.** Each translator approached their work individually taking into consideration of knowledge about Islam Culture, Sufism as well as Persian literature. Because it is incredible to investigate any kind of literary work without implementation of national aspect of the work, even though the literary work is either religious sphere, or scientific or fantastic ones.

Any work has its own process before translation, or in other words, its history. the work of Gulshani Raz is no exception as well.

If we say that the first version of Gulshani Raz's work was translated by Whinfield, he got acquainted with this work when he was in India, at that time he was studying at a music school in India and during the lessons he got acquainted with some oriental masterpieces. At that time, he knew the Persian language perfectly and because of his love for oriental literature, he translated the work and later other Rubai's and Masnavis related to Sufism into English.

Starting analysis from the prior translation by E. H. Whinfield, the work was published in 1880 in London by Trubner & Co. Ludgate Hill Press as the all rights reserved form. Relevantly, the translation work was evaluated as the one of the perfect decoding works from Persian into English. As the author was proficient in Persian language, he also managed to translate other Persian poems by Hafiz, Rumi, Omar Khayyam. Thus, reader can enjoy translation version of the literary work equally as the translator could render the deep notion of each concept and term emphasized in poems and in every verse. Here are some sample poems to show the proficiency of the translator [1].

*Sample 1. Gulshani Raz. Verses 30-40. Answer XIV, XV.*

*One tells of curl, of mole, and of eyebrow,*

*And displays to view wine, lamp and beauty*

*One speaks of his own being and its illusion,*

*Another is devoted to idols and the Magian girdle.*

*Since the language of each is according to his degree of progress,*

*They are hard to be understood of the people.*

*He who is perplexed as to these mysteries*

*Is bound to learn their meaning.*

Answer XIV and XV explores absolutely sophisticated description of human psychology and meaning of life. Literary translation was done in a really naturalistic comprehension reveals deep meaning of love to beloved. In this section of poem, translator tries express the work within smart word treasure. *Illusion – tahayyunna*, the unreal nature of all phenomenon.

Another analysis through reflection the heart can unveil the meanings that Shabistarī likens to pearls hidden inside the shells of sounds and letters. In the same context, Shabistarī uses the extended metaphor of the husk (qishr-ikhushk) and the kernel (maghz) which respectively stand for exoteric and esoteric levels of knowledge [9]: “Break the shell and take out the precious pearl/Remove the husk and grasp the kernel!

In the poem, Shabistarī uses the same husk and kernel metaphor to distinguish between the three stages of spiritual evolvement: the religious law (sharī‘at), the spiritual path (tarīqat), and the truth (ḥaqīqat):

Sample 2. *GulshaniRaz*, verse 355- 360. *Illustration3* [1].

*The law is the husk and the truth the kernel,*

*In between the two comes the path.*

*Flaws on the path would damage the kernel,*

*Once the kernel is ripe, it’s good without the husk.*

*When the gnostic reaches certitude (yaqīn)*

*The kernel will ripen and the husk break off.*

These lines imply that at the highest level of the quest where the wayfarer reaches the station of certitude and becomes immersed in the light of divine manifestation, there is no more need for observing the religious laws.

Gulshan-irāz breaks down into sections corresponding to the questions posed by Harawī about the following: creation, being, the illusory nature of this world, the relation between God and creation, the perfect human being, stages in spiritual quest, sainthood (walāya), the conditions of gnosis and union with God, and the meaning of Sufi symbols and metaphors [14].

Coming to other interpretations of the poem, Ivanov also claims “ amongst some Persian Ismaili manuscripts, which I could examine, I found a short work [3] with the title of Ba’diazta’wilatiGulshaniraz [4], which gives some Ismaili explanations of selected passages of the treaties, thus implying its being recognized as an Ismaili work. This, however, is not explicitly stated in the text itself. The work is not a real commentary, and it is not concerned with the whole of its text. It is better to regard it as an original and independent work based on the Gulshaniraz.”

Ivanov mostly rely on the ideology of the work that was on the base of not only Islamic culture but also ideology Suficised Ismailism. He adds that the And yet there is a great puzzle in it, if we analyze the Ismaili terminology which we find in the author's references to the doctrinal matters. In his speculations the author continually refers to the terms like Natiq, Asas and hujjats (in Plural). This terminology does not belong to the Eastern, or Nizari branch of Ismailism as it developed in Persia, and as it is found in different authentic works of the community in question. [6]

These terms are used only in those Persian Ismaili works which continue the tradition of Nasiri Khusraw, and which are produced in the Oxus area, where the earlier form of Ismailism, as it was under the Fatimides, was mixed together, with the more advanced forms of the Alamuti period. It continues there up till now only because of the absence of education amongst the followers of the religion which does not permit them to see the inconsistency of this mixture of the unreformed, and of the reformed systems. In the Eastern Ismaili works instead of the term Natiq is used Payghambar, Rasul, etc. The term Asas, which is originally applied to Ali ibn Abu Talib, to distinguish him from his descendants, the Imams (it is in reality the Asasu'l -imat, i.e. " the foundation of Imamat") is entirely forgotten, because the doctrine recognises the equality of all Imams, amongst whom there are no greater and ones, and no lesser ones. The term hujjat in the earlier Ismailism correspond to something like a " bishop" of the Ismaili church; there were officially 24 or 12 of them. In the Eastern Ismailism

the Hujjat is mostly one, and is endowed with as supernatural qualities as the Imam himself, to whom he is a subordinate [13].

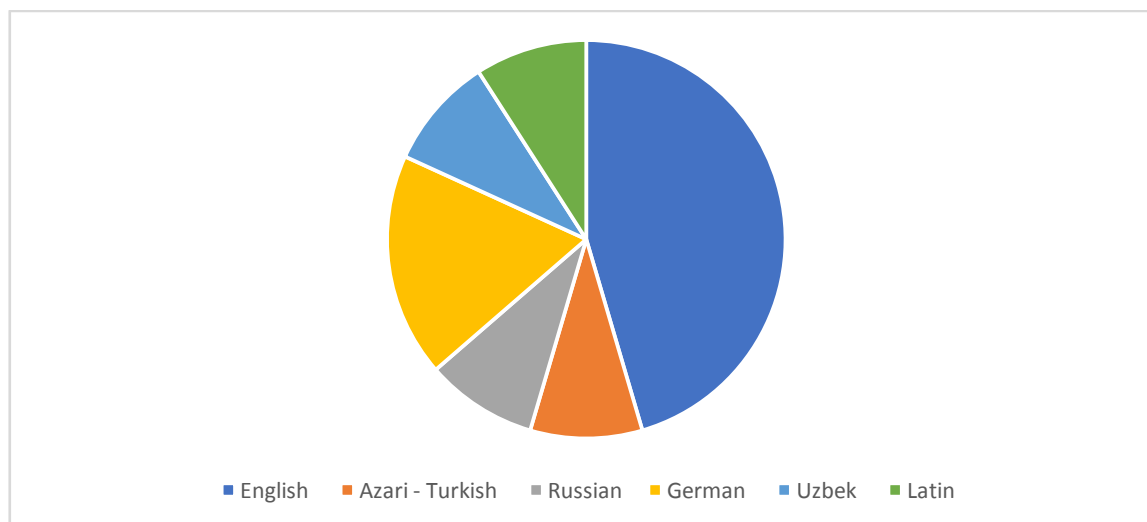
Another translation into English done by Florence Lederer and published in Phanes press in 2002 in the USA. The book begins with the introduction part named *The Art and Message of Shabistari*. This part mostly covers the divine laws and the mystic familiarity with god. Furthermore, Sufi symbolism is stressed separately and noticeable at the beginning of this version of translation. F. Lederer defined the special terminology that is relevant to Islamism before providing the translation work in the book. There are covered terms such as:

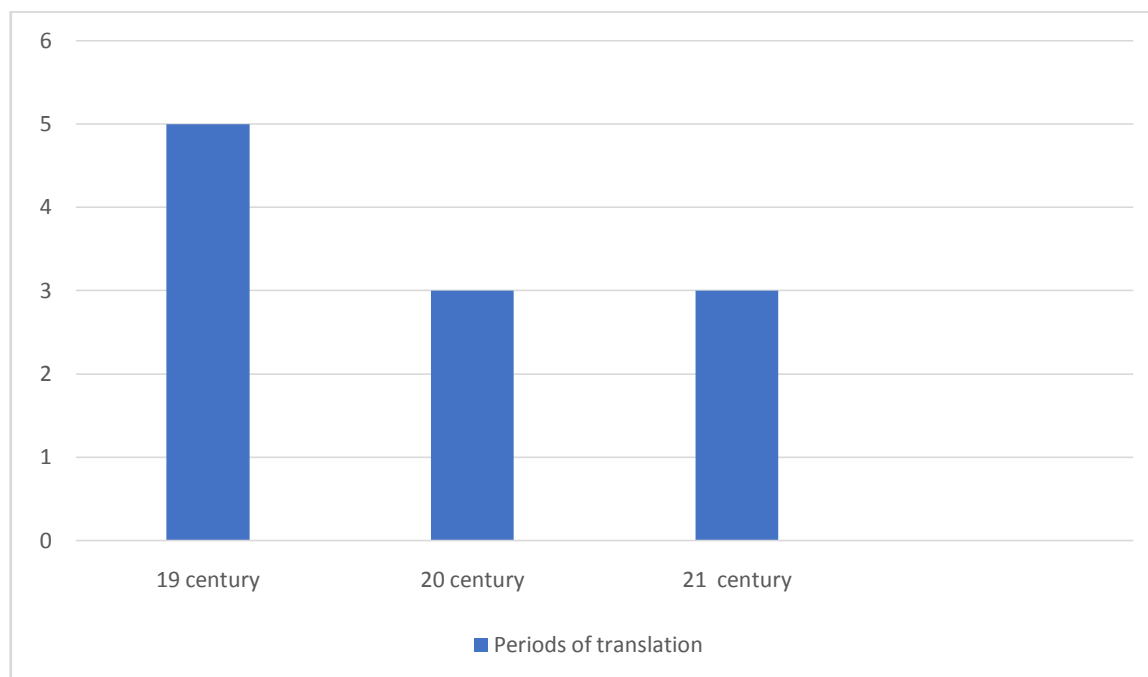
- The beloved is God – sometimes a human mirror of God;
- Embrace and kisses – the rapture of loves;
- Sleep – contemplation;
- Perfume – the wish for divine favor;
- Idolators – a man for the pure faith and infidels;
- Wine – forbidden by Mohammed and his followers, was used a symbol by Sufis to denote spiritual knowledge
- Tavern – is a place where the wine of divine lovers inebriates the pilgrim;
- Intoxication – religious ecstasy, Mirth – the joy in the love of God;
- The mole on the cheek – the point of indivisible Unity;
- The torch – the light kindled in the heart by the Beloved.

We can see by analyzing the rendition of the book by Lederer, the interpretation provided very comprehensible and readable format. The poems decoded in English form also that focuses only reading attention to the morality of the work but not the linguistic or literary analysis of the poems. Each poem states as the separate subheadings and full textual explanation and English poem version is included relatively. Even though Lederer's work is not considered as the real full translation, the book can serve to deliver ample background knowledge audience and amateurs on oriental literature studies.

**Results and Discussion.** The work “Gulshani Raz”, “The Mystic garden” was translated into more than 10 languages such as English, German, Azari -Turkish, Russian, French. The work was translated into Uzbek by Ahmadi Mujohid in 2013 and published in Tamaddun Publication with only 130 copyrights.

**Figure1. The share of languages in which the work has been translated**



**Figure 2. Periods of investigations on interpretations in the world literature.**

The two figures above illustrated the accurate data on the investigations and translations of Gulshani Raz by Shabistari. The first diagram shows that how many languages the work translated into. It is obvious from the figure that the highest amount belongs to English with 5 times corresponding in 1880 by E. Whiendfield, 1887 J. Armstrong, in 1969 Johnson Pasha, in 1920 F. Lederer, and in 2007 Robert Abdull Hayy Darr successfully. The next place taken by German linguists with two translation in 1821 by Dr. Th o l u c k and in 1838 by Von Hammer- Purgstall. Other languages Russian, Uzbek, French and Latin stand with only one time respectively.

Coming to the share of periods of translation works, the showed its peak at 5 times into English, French and Latin over the 3 centuries while the work interpreted by 3 times into 3 different languages in 20 century and 21th centuries English, Russian and Uzbek similarly.

**Conclusion.** Translation of literary works especially, oriental literature is heated point of linguistics till today. Likewise, reading books on Islamic culture is getting interested by plenty of users gradually. Gulshani Raz is one of the focus of western and American translator nowadays. As we have observed in the article above many English- speaking countries` translator did noticeable contribution in this field and even changed their worldview in the process of the work due to the love of Sufism and relevant literature. Each variant of translation work commenced with the introduction part and none of them was forbidden from explanation of to work. We can evaluate the work as reader, according to the demand of time and readers that step by step the translated masterpieces reached to be more readable and more comprehensive format.

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