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THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NIZAMI GANJAVI IN THE SUBCONTINENT: INFLUENCE, ADAPTATION, AND CONTINUITY

Key words: Nizami Ganjavi, Subcontinent, Khamsa, Haft Paiker, Laila Majnun, sheerin Farhad, Iskandar Nameh

Abstract

Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209) is one of the most celebrated Persian poets, renowned for his *Khamsa* (Five Treasures), which has profoundly influenced Persian, Turkish, and South Asian literary traditions. His works, particularly *Layla-Majnun* and *Haft Paykar*, have been widely studied, adapted, and published in the Indo-Pakistan region over the centuries. This research article explores the historical and literary significance of Nizami Ganjavi's works in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, tracing their translations, interpretations, and impact on Urdu and Persian literature in the region. It further examines the role of educational institutions, publishing houses, and scholars in disseminating his poetry and philosophy.

Nizami Ganjavi is one of the great personalities of the literary world. He left a deep impact on the poetic literature of the world and especially Muslim countries through his philosophical ideas and poetic imagination, and this honor was kept by destiny in the part of Azerbaijan. Nizami Ganjavi was born in Ganja, a city in Azerbaijan, the dervish poet who never stepped out of Ganja has made such an impact on literature around the world that no literature can deny.

What makes Nizami a global poet is, of course, not just his outstanding ability to manage words with magic and change their forms and meanings. This is just one of the conditions that make Nizami Ganjavi a genius. Nizami was a person who had read a lot. He did not read only Turkic, Persian and Arab sources. As he said himself, he was aware of various Christian and Jewish sources. If his knowledge of several languages gave him the ability to read those books, it is possible that he familiarized himself with sources in other languages through third parties. Such diverse knowledge and world outlook gave him an opportunity to create a literary world that covered the entire cultural world. The core philosophy of Nizami Ganjavi is humanism. The universal concepts of Nizami still resonate in the hearts of the people. The message of Nizami is for every human being, that is why Nizami is alive even today. Nizami always dreamed of a happy era, he lived in the era of oppression and dictatorship, but he continued to dream of a bright future. So wherever in world there is hope and dream of peace and humanism there is message of Nizami Ganjavi in form of his poetry. (Ahmad, 1966)

"The land of Azerbaijan gave birth to Nizami and the Nizami nation is undoubtedly the true inheritor of its ancient and universal culture. The culture of Azerbaijan is much older than

the culture of most nations. Nizami's immortal poetry predates Shakespeare's by 400 years. On this basis, the respect that the Azerbaijani people have for their cultural heritage is high... In the post-Nizam era, the entire region where the Persian language was prevalent, In imitation of Khamsa Nizami, more or less a thousand Khamsas were written and these imitators of Nizami were the masters of the world literature, thus prolonging the life of Nizami."

Despite the passing of 800 years, the popularity of Nizami Ganjavi continues to grow. Like other languages and regions of the world, Nizami Ganjavi's poetry had a profound impact on the literature of the subcontinent. It was under his tutelage that the tradition of Khamsa writing began. Amir Khusrau's Khamsa can be especially cited as an example in this regard. Nizami's language is Persian language, there is hardly any prominent Persian poet in the world who has not accepted influences from Nizami. (Nomani, 1920)

"Nizami is the originator of many things in poetry. For example, at first he wrote poems in five different poetry meters. Which has been emulated by the great poets since then till today. All the prominent poets have written Khamsas on his Khamsa. He first set the poetry meter in 'Makhzan-ul-Asrar' and 'Haft-Pekar' in Masnavi. First of all, he wrote five Naat in 'Makhzan-ul-Asrar' and each has a different style. At first, he presented philosophical themes in poetry. First, he introduced "Saqi Nama. First of all, he purified the Qasidah with praise. Nizami also has an influence on prominent Persian poets Urfi and Abul Fazl."

Persian and Urdu poets of subcontinent mostly followed the Nizami. Here in Subcontinent Nizami's philosophy, ethics, spirit of love were appreciated. Even Nizami's Khamsa remained an integral part of the curriculum of the madrasas of the subcontinent and is still part of the curriculum of Persian learners today.

Nizami Ganjavi's literary influences can be deeply felt in the classical and mystical literature of the subcontinent. His poetry, especially Khamsa (Panj Ganj), which includes masterpieces such as Khusrau and Shirin, Laila and Majnun, and Iskandar Nama, had a profound impact on Persian and Urdu literature. With the development of the Persian language as a scholarly and literary language in the subcontinent, Nizami's stories also became popular and local poets adopted his style, intellectual breadth, and narrative style. Amir Khusro Dehlvi incorporated local themes while retaining the Nizami colour in his Khamsa, creating a new creative blend. Similarly, Persian and Urdu poets such as Faizi, Fani Kashmiri, and Abdul Rahman Jami wrote poems in imitation of Nizami, describing the depths of love, mysticism, morality, and human nature. The influence of Nizami's poetry in Urdu can be seen directly in the traditional structure of Masnavi, where poets such as Mir, Ghalib and Iqbal took advantage of Nizami's symbolic and mystical ideas. Allama Iqbal adopted Nizami's philosophical style in his Masnavi Israr Khudi and Rumuz Bekhudi, while translators such as Munshi Govind Prashad Fiza and Maulvi Ghulam Haider Gopamvi translated Nizami's works into Urdu, which were published by Nal Kishore Press. Nizami's ishqiya and ethical poetry provided a new narrative to Sufism, Masnavi writers, and narrative poets in the subcontinent, further enriching Persian and Urdu literature and strengthening its traditional foundations. (Hussain, 2022)

"Nakhat Dehlavi served Urdu language and literature in various capacities, such as the famous Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi's famous Masnavi 'Sikandar Namah' was translated in Urdu language. 'Sikandar Namah' is not found in the poetic works and prose efforts of Nakhat Dehlavi. It is only mentioned in the Tazkiras. Whether any arrangement was made for its printing or not, all the details in this chapter are silent. Akbar Shah Sani himself was a poet and used to use the pseudonym 'Shua'. When the king realized the power of speech, he ordered the Nikhat to be transferred to Sikandar Nama Nizami Ganjavi in Urdu poetry, which he accepted wholeheartedly. When the translation was completed, the poet recited it to the

king himself. The king was very happy and exalted him with many rewards and honors. Then the same routine lasted until the end. But as the work progressed, the king died.”

Nizami Ganjavi's "Khosrow and Shirin", gained immense popularity in the literary traditions of the Indian subcontinent and deeply influenced local poets and writers. During the golden era of Persian literature, this tale was widely read and admired in the Mughal court and Sufi circles, and later, it was translated and adapted into Urdu and other regional languages numerous times. Nizami's style, inspiring many poets to compose their own versions of Shirin and Farhad's legendary love story. Early examples of such works include Urdu Masnavis by Abdullah Waiz, Ibn Ishaq and Ahmad Gujarati, while Munshi Govind Prashad Fiza wrote a famous Urdu Masnavi titled "Shirin o Khusro". Quli Qutb Shah, Mir Taqi Mir, and Ghalib also referenced Shirin and Farhad's love, sacrifice, and tragic fate in their poetry. Allama Iqbal reinterpreted the character of Farhad as a symbol of true love, perseverance, and selfhood (khudi).

Sufi poets of the Indian subcontinent also incorporated the spiritual and allegorical aspects of this legend, portraying it as a metaphor for divine love, sacrifice, and the trials of true devotion. The influence of "Khosrow and Shirin" extended beyond Urdu and Persian literature, becoming a popular theme in Punjabi, Sindhi, Bengali, and other regional folk traditions, where Farhad's struggle was seen as an epitome of passion, madness, and self-sacrifice. Poets in the subcontinent used this tale to explore themes of true love, social barriers, and the helplessness of fate, making Shirin Farhad a timeless source of emotional and intellectual inspiration in Urdu poetry and prose. (Firaqi, 2022)

"In the early 13th century Hijri, a poet named Rahmat Shah wrote '*Shirin Farhad*', but in this context, only two Masnavis are particularly noteworthy: Sheikh Abdul Wahid Maskin's '*Chashma-e-Shirin*' (1869) and Munshi Gobind Prashad Fiza's '*Shirin o Khusro*' (1878). Maskin's Masnavi contained 1,782 verses, while the second Masnavi, which is actually closer to Nizami's 'Khusro o Shirin', was written by Gobind Prashad Fiza. His Masnavi comprised 2,710 verses.

Nizami Ganjavi gave a new lease of life to the ancient Arabian legend "Laila Majnu." It gained immense popularity in the sub-continent and a number of sufis created their own satires and poems in its wake. Sufi poets of the subcontinent adopted this tragic tale as a metaphor for true love, sacrifice, and obsessive love, making the tale an integral part of poetry in Urdu, Persian, Punjabi, and other languages. (Firaqi, 2022)

"The number of translations of Layla-Majnun in Urdu is in the dozens. These include Masnavi Layla-Majnun by Ahmad Gujarati, a poet associated with the court of Quli Qutb Shah, and Masnavi Qissa-e-Layla Majnun by Abdullah Waiz Ibn Ishaq, along with several other Masnavis, ranging from Tajalli to Hawas...Nizami's influence on Urdu literature also spread through translations of some of his Masnavis into Urdu. In this regard, the name of Ghulam Haider Gopamavi is noteworthy. He translated Nizami's '*Iskandar Nama*' into Urdu verse under the title '*Guldasta-e-Shuja 'at*', which was published by Nawal Kishore Press in 1876. Ghulam Haider Gopamavi maintained the same poetic meter that Nizami had used in '*Iskandar Nama*...Additionally, a prose translation of Nizami's '*Iskandar Nama*' was done by Rasa Prashad, which was published by Nawal Kishore Press in 1873. This translation was a summarized prose adaptation of Nizami's work.

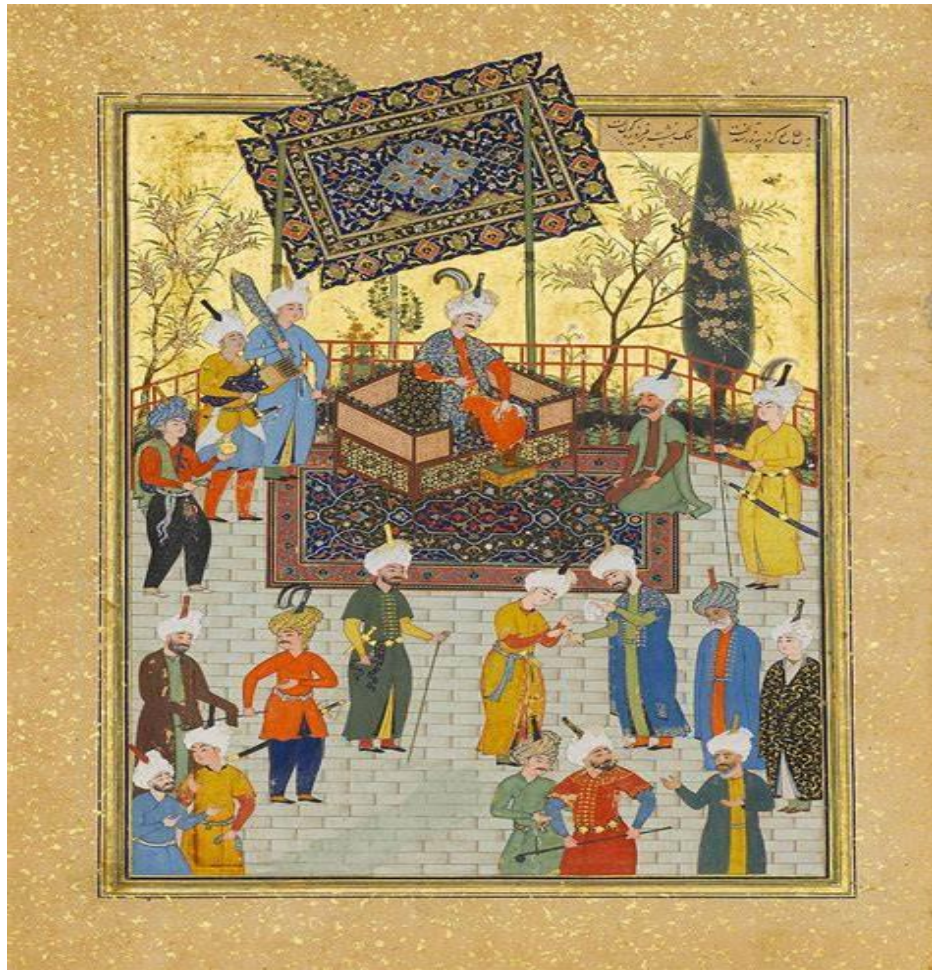
Nizami Ganjavi's impact on the literature of the subcontinent can be divided into three basic aspects. At first, he was followed by several poets of the subcontinent, especially Amir Khusrau, Faizi, and Fani Kashmiri, who created their khumsas, which provide glimpses into Nizami's style and narration. Various Urdu and Persian translations of Nizami's Khamsa were published by institutions such as Nol Kishore Press, thus making her poetry widely known in

the subcontinent. Nizami's philosophical and mystical ideas were adopted in Urdu and Persian poetry, where Iqbal, Mir, Ghalib, and other classical poets took advantage of his Sufism, Ishq, and moral teachings.

Thus, the literary and intellectual tradition of Nizami became a firm foundation in the poetic and intellectual world of the subcontinent. (Jafari)

“Following Nizami’s *Khamasa*, many poets composed their own sets of five *Masnavis*, with Amir Khusrau being the most prominent after Nizami, followed by Jami and others. Amir Khusrau, known for his innovative poetic style, introduced three additional meters beyond the five established by Nizami. However, the meters standardized by Nizami remained the most widely adopted. Urdu poets also followed this tradition, and among the classical masters whose *Masnavis* are still in circulation, the same meters introduced by Nizami continue to be used.

During the Mughal period, the art of painting made extraordinary progress and Persian literature, especially the poems of Nizami Ganjavi, were presented in a beautiful and attractive way through painting. The Mughal rulers, particularly Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan, gave royal patronage to painting, resulting in the creation of illustrative manuscripts of the Nizami's *Khamas* -



A glimpse of the culture and civilization of the subcontinent can be seen prominently in Nizami Ganjavi's *Khamasa*, which is proof that Nizami was well aware of Indian traditions, personalities and historical background. There is a mention of the Indian princess in his special "*Haft Pekar*," which highlights Indian philosophy, aesthetics and social values through

a distinctive colour and story. Similarly, several scenes from India are found in the "Iskandar Nama," which vividly describe the post-war conditions and Indian cultural background. The dialogues, traditions, and social attitudes between Iskandar and the Indian rulers also reveal the Nizami's deep historical and geographical awareness. All these references show that Nizami was not only influenced by the civilization and culture of India. Rather, he placed it as a world intellectual heritage in his poetry, which further strengthened his influence on the literature and society of the subcontinent.

(Sultanly P. D., 2017)

"Indian motives and sources have found their original artistic embodiment in Nizami Ganjavi's narrative poems as "Seven Beauties" and "Eskander-nameh"... In the narrative poem "Seven Beauties" the first tale dealing with the city of Garageyimliler (Black-dressed) – from the land of Fairies has been given from the name of Indian girl... In both of parts of narrative poem of "Eskander-nameh" most of the events are related with the life of Indians. Nizami Ganjavi's benefiting from the Indian sources is related with some factors."

In the 19th century, the development of Persian language in the subcontinent was at its peak, as a result of which the deep influence of Nizami Ganjavi can be seen on the poets here. Persian was not only a courtly and academic language. But it was also a primary source of scholarly and literary discussion, which is why Amir Khusrau, Ghalib, and other classical poets took full advantage of Nizami's metaphors, and poetic style. In the twentieth century, when the intellectual and ideological awakening began in the Islamic world, Allama Iqbal adopted elements of Nizami Ganjavi such as Sufism, Ishq, Khuddi, and Hikmah in his poetry. His poetry reflects Nizami's philosophical thoughts, historical insights and narrative style, proving that Nizami's influence is still alive in the subcontinent's intellectual and literary heritage. (Firaqi, 2022)

"Nizami's influence is so pervasive that even a poet like Allama Muhammad Iqbal could not escape his influence. Not only in the style of his Saqi Nama, but also in many places, Nizami's influence is reflected in Iqbal's poetry. Like Nizami said "Riyaheen Baksh Bad e Subh Gahi" Allama Iqbal says "Ye payam de gai ha mujhy bad e subh gahi" "At one place, he has also incorporated a famous verse of Nizami through Tazmeen, where he refers to Nizami as Hazrat Nizami to express his reverence for him.

Nizami Ganjavi's influence on Subcontinent literature is profound and far-reaching, shaping both Persian and Urdu literary traditions. His Khamsa (Five Treasures) inspired generations of poets, particularly during the Mughal era, when Persian was the dominant literary language. Poets like Amir Khusrau, Faizi, and Fani Kashmiri followed his storytelling techniques, allegorical style, and thematic depth, integrating them into their own works. Even with the decline of Persian in the 19th and 20th centuries, Nizami's legacy remained strong, influencing Urdu poets, including Allama Iqbal, whose philosophical poetry reflects themes of selfhood, love, and wisdom to Nizami's narratives. The adaptation, translation, and poetic imitation of Nizami's works in the subcontinent demonstrate his enduring impact, making him an essential figure in the evolution of Persian-Urdu storytelling and literary aesthetics. His influence continues to resonate in Sufi poetry, philosophical discourse, and classical literary traditions of the region. (Nadvi, 1993)

"Eight hundred years have passed since this legend of beauty and love, but there has been no difference in the significance, power and charm of Nizami's Layla and Majnun. Even today, it is a most favorite subject of poets and writers of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and some other eastern languages. In Arabic, it is only found in the form of the Qasayd. But Persian and Urdu have given it a lifeline. Nizami Ganjavi was the first to give life to this story in Persian, followed by Persian poets such as Hatfi, Meeksha, Amir Khusrau and Jami. Urdu is the most

widely used language in this field. Naseer uddin Hashmi has mentioned about ten such Urdu writers and poets like Aajiz, Mahboob Alam, Kamtar, Hosh, Naami, Haideri, Iman, Nazar, Tujli and Ruswa in his article 'Laila Majnun Ki Dastanein in Urdu'. who have paid particular attention to this subject. Apart from this, many legends have also narrated this story.”

Here in the chart, such data is being given which can give an idea of how much work was done on Nizami in the subcontinent. His words were published, translated, annotated, followed by masterpieces of poetry and named after the Khamsa of Nizami.

Layla Majnun Urdu Editions Followed By Nizami Ganjavi

No	Book	Writer	Publisher	City	Year
1	Layla Majnun (Ba Tasweer)	Shams Lakhnawi	Saeedi Press	Lucknow	1927
2	Qissa Layla Majnun	Nazeer Akbar Abadi	MatbaHashimi	NF	NF
3	Qissa Layla Majnun	Syed WasiHaideri	Maktabajamia	Delhi	NF
4	Majnunlayla	Amir Khusrau	Matbah Institute Ali Garrh	Ali Garrh	1917
5	Layla Majnun (Drama)	Shaaddehlwi	Agarwal Book Depot	Delhi	NF
6	Muraqa Layla Majnun(Drama)	Muhammad HadiRuswa	Ram Naraain Lal Publisher	Allahabad	1928
7	Layla Majnun	Aajiz	NF	NF	1636
8	Layla Majnun	Ahmad	NF	NF	1640
9	Layla MajnunKhusrau	Khusrau	MatbahNawal Kishore	Lucknow	1880
10	Layla Majnun Urdu	Mirza Muhammad Taqi	MatbahNawal Kishore	Lucknow	1882
11	Layla Majnun	Munshi Dil	Fayaaz Book Depot	Ludhiana	1888

Khusrau Sheerin Editions

No	Writer	Book	Publisher	Year of Publication
	Molana Nizam Uddin Ganjavi	KhusrauSheerin Nizami	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1902
	Molana Nizam Uddin Ganjavi	Khusrau Sheerin Nizami	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1937
	Maulana Nizamuddin Ganjui	Khusrau Sheerin Nizami	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1905
	MolanaNizam Uddin Ganjavi	Mathnawi Khusrau Sheerin Nizami	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1960/3rd

	Khwaja Nizami Ganjavi	Sikandar Namah-i-Bahri	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Kanpur	1916
	Nizami Ganjavi	Khamasa NizamiGanjavi	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1923/4th
	Khwaja NizamiGanjavi	Sikandar NamahBahry	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1882
		Masnavi Haft PekarMolanaNizamy	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	

Translations/Sharah of Nizami Khamasa

No	Writer	Sharah	Publisher	Date of Publication
	Khan Arzoo	Sikandar Namahsharah Khan Arzoo	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1876
	Ulma-e-Kolkata	Sharah Sikandar Nama Ulma-e-Kolkata	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1903
	WaheedMolvi Abdul Majeed	SharahKamil Sikandar Nama Ba Zuban e Urdu	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	1884
		Sikandar NamaSharah	Matba Mohammadi, Kanpur	1333 hijri
	Mohammad Gahlvi	Sharah Sikandar Nama	MatbaMunshi Gulab Singh	
	Muhammad Naseer ud Din Shah	Sharah Sikandar Nama Bari	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	
	MolanaGhayasud din	Sharah Sikandar Nama Bari	Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	
			Matba Nami Munshi Nawal Kishor, Lucknow	

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