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Why Urdu Poetry Still Speaks to Us, and What *The Art of Expression* Reminds Us About the Language of Feeling

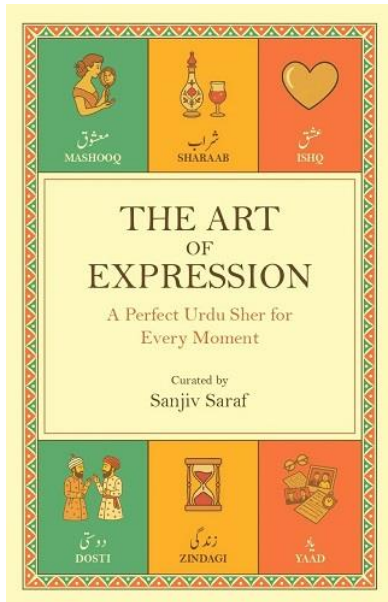
A Book Review by Chesfeeda Jan

In an age shaped by constant notifications, quick messages and hurried communication, it may seem surprising that poetry written centuries ago continues to speak so powerfully

to readers today. Yet Urdu poetry, with its finely crafted couplets and emotional depth, remains remarkably relevant. It continues to offer something that everyday language often struggles to provide: a way to express what we feel most deeply.

Across South Asia, generations have turned to a *sher* when ordinary words felt insufficient. A couplet shared in

conversation, recited in a gathering or remembered quietly in solitude often does more than beautify language. It helps give shape to emotions that are otherwise difficult to articulate. In just two lines, the Urdu poetic tradition has long managed to hold entire worlds of feeling.



This cultural inheritance lies at the heart of *The Art of Expression*, a book by Sanjiv Saraf. As the founder of the Rekhta Foundation, Sanjiv has spent years working to make Urdu literature accessible to wider audiences. Through

Rekhta's digital platform, millions of readers across the world have discovered the beauty of Urdu poetry. In this book, Sanjiv turns to one of the most beloved forms within that tradition: the Urdu couplet.

The Art of Expression brings together a carefully chosen selection of verses that reflect the emotional richness of Urdu poetry. What makes the book particularly engaging is its simplicity of approach. Instead of presenting poetry through heavy literary explanation, it allows the couplets to speak for themselves. The reader is invited to experience the emotions,

reflections and insights contained within these lines, a *sher* for every occasion and situation in life.

The strength of Urdu poetry has always been its ability to say so much in so little. A *sher* often appears simple at first glance, yet its meaning deepens the longer one reflects upon it.

Consider this famous couplet on endless desires by Mirza Ghalib:

*Hazaron khwahishen aisi ki har khwahish pe dam
nikle*

Bahut nikle mere armaan lekin phir bhi kam nikle

In just two lines, Ghalib captures something universal about human life. Desire rarely disappears, even when some wishes are fulfilled. The sense of longing continues. It is precisely this ability to speak to shared human experiences that allows Urdu poetry to travel beyond language and geography.

Historically, poetry in South Asia was never limited to books alone. It lived in gatherings, letters and everyday conversation. A well-remembered couplet could illuminate a thought, respond to a situation or express a feeling more beautifully than prose ever could. Even today, a *sher* often serves as a cultural shorthand for emotions that might otherwise be difficult to explain.

Over the past decade, interest in Urdu literature has grown again. Literary festivals, translations and digital platforms have made classical poets more accessible to younger audiences. Rekhta has played an important role in this cultural revival by building a vast archive of poetry, prose and literary scholarship that readers across the world can explore.

The Art of Expression may be seen as a continuation of this effort. While digital platforms allow readers to browse endlessly, a book offers a different experience. It invites the reader to pause. One can open the book at any page and

encounter a couplet that resonates with a particular mood or moment.

Some verses evoke nostalgia. Others invite introspection. Many simply remind us of the elegance with which Urdu poets observed life and its many contradictions.

In a world where language often becomes rushed and fragmented, Urdu poetry offers something quietly valuable. It reminds us to slow down and listen to the music of words. It shows how deeply human emotions remain connected across time.

For readers new to Urdu poetry, *The Art of Expression* provides a gentle and welcoming introduction to a rich literary tradition. For those already familiar with it, the book serves as a reminder of the extraordinary emotional insight contained in its verses.

Ultimately, the book highlights that poetry is a living language of feeling that continues to evolve with every generation of readers. As people search for words to express love, uncertainty, hope and reflection, poetry remains one of the most generous forms of expression available to us. Books like *The Art of Expression* remind us that this tradition is not fading but finding new readers and new meanings in the present. And as long as people continue to look for language that speaks to the heart as well as the mind, the quiet power of the Urdu couplet will continue to endure.

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