



Women Poets Iranica
A Research Compendium

Ashraf Mishkāṭī: The Love-Stricken Poet of Gilan

Maryam Shadmohammadi and Abbas Panahi*

PhD in Persian - PhD in Iranian History

September 26, 2025

<https://poets.iranicaonline.org/scholar/maryam-shadmohammadi/>

<https://poets.iranicaonline.org/scholar/abbas-panahi/>

*Maryam Shadmohammadi holds a PhD in Persian Language and Literature from Azad University, Tehran Central Branch. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Persian Language and Literature at Azad University, Chalous, Mazandaran.

*Abbas Panahi holds a PhD in Iranian history and is an Associate Professor of History at the Institute of Gilan Studies and a member of the Silk Research Group at the University of Gilan.

The Constitutional Revolution marked the beginning of a new awakening across Iran, especially in Gilan. One of the most profound impacts of this political, social, and intellectual movement was the active participation of women in various spheres of society. Women in Gilan have historically demonstrated high levels of social engagement. *Jam'īyyat-i sa'ādat-i nisvān* (The society for felicity of women) stands as the first Iranian organization to recognize and celebrate March 8 as International Women's Day.¹ The commemoration and celebration of this occasion in the city of Rasht represented the first large-scale social movement of its kind, spearheaded by a group of progressive women who had gathered under the banner of *Jam'īyyat-i sa'ādat-i nisvān*. Over time, this group became a pioneering force behind a wide range of cultural and social movements that influenced women's lives in Gilan. Women's activism in the region was not new. It was rooted in the cultural and social traditions of Gilan. However, with the gradual fracturing of entrenched Qajar-era customs, the scope and visibility of women's participation increased significantly. Consequently, from the late Constitutional Era onward, with the growing access to education and cultural opportunities, women from Gilan not only participated collectively but also gained individual prominence in cultural and social spheres. Many emerged as distinguished figures in the cultural landscape of Gilan and Iran.

One of these prominent women from Gilan was Ashraf Mishkāṭī. She came from a renowned family in Langarud. Beyond

her innate literary talent, she inherited the art of poetry from her lineage and pursued poetry seriously. Alongside her literary endeavors, she was also deeply engaged in social activism. In terms of poetic style, Mishkāṭī remained faithful to the traditions of classical Persian poetry. Thematically, her deep attachment to nature and the geography of Gilan is a recurring inspiration in her work. The cities of this region and northern Iran more broadly appear vividly in her poetry. From an intellectual and social perspective, her collection of poetry often centers on themes such as homeland, nationalism, and social issues. In addition to these topics, women's freedom and rights are among Mishkāṭī's central concerns. These issues appear repeatedly in her poetry in various forms.

Mishkāṭī was not merely a poet of roses, nightingales, and idealized nature. She was a poet with conscious social engagement. Alongside her attention to regional and national matters, she also responded to international events and made a deliberate effort not to remain indifferent to global developments and their social repercussions. Mishkāṭī composed poetry in a variety of traditional forms, including *masnavī* (rhyming couplets), *rubā'ī* (quatrain) and *qasīdah* (ode), though the *ghazal* held a particularly special place in her poetic expression. As for literary influences, she drew inspiration from classical Persian poets such as Firdawsī, Sa'dī, and Hāfiz, whose influence is strongly felt in her work. Among modern poets, however, it was Parvīn I'tisāmī who had the greatest impact on her. Traces of I'tisāmī's intellectual influence can be clearly observed in Mishkāṭī's poetry. Regrettably, Mishkāṭī has not received the recognition she deserves in the canon of contemporary Iranian poetry. Despite composing over two thousand verses, her ideas and contributions remain largely overlooked.² One probable reason for this neglect is the lack of widespread publication of her collected works.

¹Nāhīd 'Abd al-Husayn, *Zanān-i Irān dar junbish-i mashrūṭah* [Iranian women in the constitutional movement] (Tabriz: Ihyā', 1360/1981), 113. "...Therefore, on this day, the 8th of March, the International Women's Day, the Committee of the Iranian Women's Organization in Gilan, representing the progressive and organized women of the province—who serve as the voice of hundreds of thousands of marginalized women from Gilan—considers it its right to call upon the honorable representatives of the Fourteenth National Assembly. Relying on the principles of the United Nations Charter and its ratification by the Iranian Parliament, we urge them to pay close attention to the proposed bill of June 1944 put forth by the Tūdah Party faction regarding the equal political and social rights of women. We implore them to leave a lasting legacy by passing the necessary legal measures to establish the political, social, and economic equality of women and men, thereby fulfilling the principles of the United Nations Charter." —Provincial Committee of the Women's Organization of Gilan, National Archives of Iran, Document Retrieval Number: 40494-310.

²Ashraf's *Divān* was privately published in 1347/1968 in a limited edition, yet it remained inaccessible to the public. It was not until 1402/2023, when Dr. Rūhīfar, in collaboration with Sipīd'rūd Publishing in Rasht, undertook a scholarly effort, that a significant portion of her poetry was made available for publication in Iran.

³Zahrā Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah: Tahlīl va bar'rasī-i ash'ār-i bānū Ashraf Mishkāṭī Gīlānī* (Rasht: Sipīd'rūd, 1402/2023).

⁴Dāvūd Haqīqat, *Tazkirah al-Shu'arā': Az nivīsandīgān va dānīshmandān-i mu'āsīr-i Gīlān* (Rasht: Haqīqat-i Rasht, n.d.), 266.

⁵Alī-Akbar Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhanvār az yik hizār sāl pīsh tā imrūz kih bih zabān-i Fārsī sukhan guftah'and* (Tehran: Mu'assisah-'i matbū'āt-i 'Alī Akbar 'Ilmī, 1333/1954), 9–12.

⁶Muhammad Bāqir Burqa'ī, *Sukhan'varān-i nāmī-i mu'āsīr-i Īrān* (Qom: Khurram, 1373/1994), 267.

Review of Literature

Brief references to Ashraf Mishkāṭī appear in several anthologies and biographical compendiums. However, no independent study has yet been devoted to a comprehensive examination of her life, historical context, and intellectual and cultural contributions. This lack of dedicated scholarship may, in part, be attributed to the scarcity of archival records and reliable documentation concerning her life.

Among the few existing sources is Zahrā Rūhīfar's work titled *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah: Tahlīl va bar'rasī-i ash'ār-i bānū Ashraf Mishkāṭī Gīlānī* (A journey through the hall of mirrors: An analysis and review of the poems of lady Ashraf Mishkāṭī from Gilan),³ which was published alongside her collected poems. This book includes brief commentary and analysis of selected poems by Mishkāṭī. However, the book limits itself to general remarks on her personal life and historical era, offering little in terms of in-depth biographical or contextual insight. Despite these limitations, Rūhīfar does attempt to shed light on Mishkāṭī's life, literary and intellectual pursuits, and poetic legacy. She seeks to introduce readers to the literary and cultural persona of this poet, thinker, and advocate for freedom—an esteemed woman from Gilan who was among the early pioneers and leading figures in the women's emancipation movement in Iran.

In addition to Rūhīfar's work, there are scattered and mostly cursory mentions of Mishkāṭī's life and literary legacy in various other sources. Among these are *Tazkirah al-shu'arā': az nivīsandīgān va dānīshmandān-i mu'āsīr-i Gīlān* (The biographical dictionary of poets: Of writers and scholars of contemporary Gilan) by Dāvūd Haqīqat,⁴ *Zanān-i sukhanvār az yik hizār sāl pīsh tā imrūz kih bih zabān-i Fārsī sukhan guftah'and* (The eloquent women who have spoken Persian from a thousand years ago until today) by 'Alī-Akbar Mushīr Salīmī,⁵ *Sukhan'varān-i nāmī-i mu'āsīr-i Īrān* (The renowned orators of contemporary Iran) by Muhammad Bāqir Burqa'ī,⁶ and *Gīlān dar qalam'raw-ī*



shī'r va adab (Gilan in the realm of poetry and literature) by Ibrāhīm Fakhrā'ī.⁷ Further brief references to Mishkāṭī are made by Siyyid Hādī Harīrī in *Zanān-i shā'ir-i mu'āsir-i Īrān* (Contemporary women poets of Iran)⁸ and by 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Aqīqī Bakhshāyishī in *Zanān-i nāmī dar tārikh, farhang va tamaddun-i Islāmī* (Notable women in Islamic history, culture, and civilization).⁹ Notably, Bakhshāyishī identifies Mishkāṭī's first name as Ma'sūmah, and does so without citing any sources. Abbās Pūr Malik Ārā also contributes material on Mishkāṭī's poetic characteristics and biographical profile in issue no. 6 of the *Gīlah'vā* magazine.¹⁰ Similarly, Pūrān Farrukh'zād provides a general account of Mishkāṭī in *Kār'namā-yi zanān-i kārā-yi Īrān: Az dīrūz tā imrūz* (The achievements of Iranian women: From the past to the present).¹¹ Additionally, the local weekly *Sāyibān* magazine, which published only two issues in the 1330s/1950s, dedicated its second issue to Mishkāṭī. Unfortunately, no surviving copy of this issue appears to be available.¹²

Ashraf Mishkāṭī's Life and Time

Mishkāṭī, pen-named "Ashraf," was born in Tehran to Hāj Mīrzā 'Alī-Akbar Khān Mishkūyah al-Saltanah and Hājiyah Maryam Khānūm Navvāb Muta'alīyah Munajjimī.¹³ Mishkāṭī's maternal lineage traces back to Fath-'Alī Shāh Qajar. She inherited her poetic talent from her mother, a learned woman who was both a poet and a calligrapher of her time. Her grandmother, Shāh Jahān Khānūm, was the daughter of Fath-'Alī Shāh-i Qajar and the wife of 'Abd al-Bāqī Khān Munajjim Bāshī, who was versed in astronomy and mathematics.¹⁴ From an early age, Mishkāṭī composed poetry and exhibited a refined and sensitive nature. She attended her first years of secondary school at Nāmūs High School in Tehran and later moved to Paris for further education, where she learned French and Arabic. She also traveled to Russia, Germany, and Belgium.¹⁵ Upon her return to Iran, she pursued a career in teaching and worked as a literature instructor in schools, where she received repeated praise from the Ministry of Culture.¹⁶

⁷Ibrāhīm Fakhrā'ī, *Gīlān dar qalam'raw-'i shī'r va adab* (Rasht: Tā'atī 1377/1998), 46.

⁸Siyyid Hādī Hā'irī, *Zanān-i shā'ir-i mu'āsir-i Īrān* (Tehran: Nashr-i Siyyid Qāsim Hādīyān va Siyyid Dāvūd Mūsavī, 1333/1954).

⁹'Abd al-Rahīm 'Aqīqī Bakhshāyishī, *Zanān-i nāmī dar tārikh, farhang, va tamaddun-i Islāmī* (Qom: Navd-i Islām, 1382/2003).

¹⁰Abbās Pūr Malik Ārā, "Zanān-i suhanvar-i Gīlān: Ashraf Mishkāṭī" [Women orators from Gilan: Ashraf Mishkāṭī], *Gīlah'vā* 6 (Day 1371/January 1992): 20–21.

¹¹Pūrān Farrukh'zād, *Kār'namā-yi zanān-i kārā-yi Īrān, az dīrūz tā imrūz* (Tehran: Qatrah, 1381/2002), 755.

¹²Muhammad Āzarmand and 'Abd al-Husayn Malik'zādah, *Haftah'nāmāh Sāyibān* (Rasht, 1330/1951).

¹³There is a scholarly disagreement regarding the birth year of Ashraf Mishkāṭī. Muhammad Bāqīr Burqa'ī has recorded it as 1290/1911 while 'Alī-Akbar Mushīr Salīmī has stated 1294/1915. Dāvūd Haqīqat has mentioned 1296/1917, whereas Zahrā Rūhīfar has noted 1286/1907.

¹⁴See "Ashraf Mishkāṭī Gīlānī," accessed May 19, 2025, <http://www.ashrafmishkati.com/biography/>.

¹⁵Hā'irī, *Zanān-i shā'ir-i mu'āsir-i Īrān*, 11.

¹⁶'Abd al-Rahīm 'Aqīqī Bakhshāyishī, *Zanān-i nāmī dar tārikh, farhang, va tamaddun-i Islāmī*, 399.

¹⁷See "Ashraf Mishkātī Gīlānī," accessed May 19, 2025, <http://www.ashrafmishkati.com/biography/>.

¹⁸Martin Luther King was a leader of the Civil Rights Movement for African Americans. Rūhifār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 82.

¹⁹Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah (Tehran: Tīhrān-i Mussavar, 1351/1972).

Mishkātī was also an advocate for the women's liberation movement and a prominent figure in the cultural activities of her time. She regularly delivered speeches at the annual celebrations organized by the "Iranian Women's Association" (Kānūn-i Bānūvān-i Īrān) in the Hall of Culture (Tālār-i Farhangī), reciting her poems related to the event. In her poetry, she followed the styles of great poets such as Firdawsī, Hāfiz, Sa'dī, and Rūmī, as well as contemporary poets like Parvīn I'tisāmī, Nīmā Yūshīj, Malik al-Shu'arā' Bahār, and Parvīz Khānlārī. Her poems were published in newspapers of the time, such as Parvarish, Fikr-i javān, Ittilā'āt, Āftāb-i sharq, Īrān-i naw, and Kitāb-i asrār-i khilqat.

Based on the poems she wrote in support of unveiling and women's freedom, it is evident that she felt a sense of pride in the Iranian women's movement, regarding it as a sign of progress for women's rights. Mishkātī composed a poem in support of unveiling, which she recited in the presence of Reza Shah at the Bāshgāh-i Afsarān (Officers' Club) in Rasht. She is said to have faced significant resistance from the opponents of unveiling.¹⁷

Most of Mishkātī's poetry centers on moral and social themes, with a particular focus on freedom and women's rights. In her masnavī "Sifid va siyāh" (White and black), she voices a powerful protest against the racist ideologies of contemporary American society and expressed admiration for Martin Luther King's ideas.¹⁸ Similarly, in her ghazals "Mā nisvān" (We women) and "Tawq-i bandigī" (The shackles of servitude), she encourages women to rise and resist the oppression and injustice they faced.

Mishkātī's poems were later compiled in a collection titled Tālār-i āyīnah (The hall of mirrors).¹⁹ The book opens with the evocative poem "Bih nām-i Khudā" (In the name of God), a masnavī composed in the style of the great poet Firdawsī. In another masnavī titled "Firdawsī," Mishkātī expresses her deep admiration for this iconic Iranian poet, written in honor of the millennium of his birth.



In 1330/1951, Mishkāṭī entered a competition organized by Iran-Pakistan Literary Association with her poem “Barf va zughāl” (Snow and charcoal). She won first place among 700 participants, receiving an award from the association.²⁰ Known for her remarkable improvisational abilities, she continued to demonstrate literary excellence. In 1347/1968, she again took part in the association’s activities, composing a ghazal in tribute to the celebrated poet Iqbāl Lāhūrī.

Mishkāṭī spent much of her life in Gilan, in the village of Qasimabad, a district of Rudsar County, where she resided on her inherited estate, Afshār’sarā. There, she devoted herself to gardening, reading, and composing poetry. However, her distance from the capital and lack of engagement with the literary circles limited her visibility in contemporary literary circles, and she remained largely unrecognized by major literary figures of the time. After retiring, Mishkāṭī moved to the United States and settled in Washington, D.C., where she occasionally participated in events organized by the Iranian American Literary Society and the Husayni Center of Washington. She died in 1368/1989 in Washington. In accordance with her will, Mishkāṭī’s body was laid to rest in Qom, in her family’s mausoleum, beside her father’s grave.²¹

Over the course of her life, Mishkāṭī was married twice—first to Mīrzā Yūsuf Khān Munajjimī, and later to Ghulām Rizā Razzāq. Both unions ultimately ended in divorce. She had six children—Maryam, Gītī, Mīnā, Mītrā, Khusraw, and Parvīz—all of whom went on to distinguish themselves in the fields of art and literature.²²

The Influence of Intellectual Currents on Mishkāṭī’s Thought and Poetry

Ashraf Mishkāṭī can be regarded as a product of the intellectual and elite-nurturing movement that arose from the Constitutional Revolution of Iran and the early years of the Pahlavi

²⁰Burqa ʿī, Sukhan’varān-i nāmī-yi mu’āsir-i Īrān, 267.

²¹Farrukh’zād, Kār’namā-yi zanān-i kārā-yi Īrān, 755.

²²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āy-inah, 21–31; Haqīqat, Tazkirah al-Shu’arā’, 266; Burqa ʿī, Sukhan’varān-i nāmī-yi mu’āsir-i Īrān, 267; Mushīr Salmī, Zanān-i sukhanvār, 9–10; Fakhrā ʿī, Gilān dar qalam’raw-ī shi’r va adab, 46.

²³Yahyā Āryanpūr, *Az Sabā tā Nīmā* [From Sabā to Nīmā] (4th repr. ed., Tehran: Zavvār, 1382/2003), 3:6–11.

²⁴'Abd al-Hādī Hā'irī, *Nakhus-tīn rūyā'rūyī-i andīshah'garān-i Īrān bā dū rūyah-'i tamaddun-i burjū'āzī-i gharb* [The first encounters of Iranian thinkers with two facets of Western bourgeois civilization] (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1402/2023), 15.

²⁵Hūshang 'Abbāsī, *Dar'amādī bar adabiyāt-i Gīlakī* [An introduction to Gilaki literature] (Rasht: Farhang-i Īliyā, 1389/2010), 19.

²⁶Rūhifār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 32.

era. The Constitutional Movement, which emerged from the encounter between Iran's insular, traditional society and the progressive Western world of the time, led to a recalibration of patriarchal attitudes and a transformation in the discourse surrounding women's issues. This intellectual and social shift was a direct consequence of the Constitutional Revolution, itself rooted in the broader intellectual awakening that followed extensive exchanges between Iranians and Western civilization. These encounters introduced sweeping changes, exposing Iran to the forces of modernity.²³ As a result, Iranians influenced by Western modernity endeavored to initiate an intellectual movement aimed at transforming a society that was grappling with despotism and cultural and economic deprivation.²⁴ The stark contrast between Iranian and European lifestyles left a profound impression on these intellectuals and prompted deep reflection. Upon their return to Iran, they became fervent advocates for the implementation of modern political and social ideals modeled on Western paradigms. With the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution, Iran's socio-political landscape began to shift. Intellectuals fostered closer ties with the general populace, while artists and poets cultivated a deep sense of empathy and solidarity with the lower and oppressed classes, infusing their poetry with political and social consciousness.²⁵

Meanwhile, the status of women in Western societies inspired a number of progressive and enlightened Iranian women—particularly those engaged in poetry and literature, and often from the upper echelons of society—to draw attention to the condition of European women, thereby fostering new awareness, expectations, and aspirations among Iranian women. Among these women was Mishkāṭī, who championed freedom and gave voice to women oppressed under a patriarchal order, emerging as one of the earliest advocates of the women's liberation movement.²⁶



Ashraf was once among the wise
A woman of noble and freeborn lineage²⁷

²⁷Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhanvār*, 9.

²⁸Mishkāṭī, *Tālār-i āyīnah*, 87.

²⁹Mishkāṭī, *Tālār-i āyīnah*, 87.

Although Mishkāṭī herself came from an affluent and privileged background, never having experienced injustice or the hardships of poverty, she could not remain indifferent to the inequalities, injustices, and oppression inflicted upon the marginalized, particularly women, by the wealthy and powerful classes. Upon arriving in the United States in 1347/1968, Mishkāṭī was deeply moved by the stark social inequalities between white and black Americans, as well as the social protests led by Martin Luther King. In response, she composed a poem protesting the prevailing conditions in America. In the conclusion of the poem, she alludes to the famous lines of Sa‘dī, expressing the belief that “Human beings are members of a whole.”²⁸ This poem, along with other works in her collection that address the theme of ending discrimination, underscores her progressive and modern outlook.

Mishkāṭī’s poetry consistently reflects her sensitive and critical perspective on the social and political issues of her time. She repeatedly condemns the oppressors and tyrants of her era, denouncing them for their cruelty and injustice. In an era when patriarchal and misogynistic ideologies were deeply entrenched in Iran, Mishkāṭī’s travels to Europe exposed her to a different reality: women in Western societies enjoyed equal rights and intellectual freedom. Inspired by this newfound awareness, she returned to Iran determined to champion the women’s liberation movement. Through her poem “Tawq-i bandigī,” she called on Iranian women to unite and strive for their human rights and equality with men—symbolically shedding the shackles that Western women had freed themselves from through awareness and thought. Earlier, she had written “Mā nīsvān” to inspire Iranian women to resist the oppression and injustice imposed upon them by the patriarchal structures of their society.²⁹

³⁰Farrukh'zād, *Kār'namā-yi zanān-i kārā-yi Irān*, 755.

³¹Mishkāṭī, *Dīvān-i ash'ār-i Ashraf Mishkāṭī* [Collected poems of Ashraf Mishkāṭī], ed. Muhammad Hasan Siyyidān (Tehran: Bunyād-i Muqūfāt-i Duktur Mahmūd Afshār, 1373/1994).

³²Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhanvār*, 9.

³³Firdawsī, *Shāh'nāmāh*, ed. E. Bertel's (Moscow: Idārah-'i Intishārāt-i Adabiyāt-i Khāvar, 1960), 1:12.

The Influence of Classical and Contemporary Poets on Mishkāṭī

Mishkāṭī had a deep interest in studying the works of her predecessors, to the extent that she memorized and internalized much of their poetry. This dedication led her to adopt the poetic style of earlier masters.³⁰ She devoted significant time to immersing herself in the writings of luminaries such as Firdawsī, Hāfīz, Sa'ādī, and Mawlānā. Not only did she emulate their poetic techniques in her own verse, but she was also influenced by their thoughts, themes, and literary content. Her entire *Dīvān* reflects the lexical and stylistic echoes of these celebrated figures of Persian literature.³¹

Mishkāṭī held Firdawsī in particularly high regard, drawing the most profound inspiration from him among all the poets. The *masnavī* form stands as the most prominent poetic structure in the *Tālār-i āyīnah* collection, where she extensively employs this classical genre to articulate her thoughts, emotions, and beliefs. Despite her evident indebtedness to many of the great poets of Persian literature, Mushīr Salīmī regards her as a follower of Sa'ādī.³² In a manner reminiscent of Firdawsī, Mishkāṭī commences her *masnavī* with an invocation to God.

Bih nām-i khudāvand-i jān va khirad

Kaz-īn bartar andīshah bar na-gzarad

In the Name of the God of life and intellect

Beyond this, no thought can surpass³³

Bih nām-i khudāvand-i daryā va mihr

Padīdāvar-i lājvardī-i sipihr

In the name of the God of the sea and love



Creator of the lapis lazuli sky³⁴

The instructive masnavī “Nagīn-i girān’ māyah” (The precious gem), with its linguistic solidity, mature vocabulary, and skillful use of literary devices, evokes the refined poetry of Firdawsī.³⁵

In another instance of literary homage, Mishkātī draws upon the meter, rhyme, structure, and thematic content of Nāsir-i Khusraw’s poem “Bār-i dānish” (The fruit of knowledge) and composed “Shīvah-’i mahtarī” (The manner of chieftainship).

Hāfiz, the great Persian ghazal poet of the AH 8th/14th century, was also a significant influence on Mishkātī. His ideas and poetic style served as a model for her own ghazals. As Rūhīfar notes, “The similarity between Ashraf’s ghazals and those of Hāfiz lies in the artistic use of verbs and the musicality of her verses. She occasionally draws upon words from the ghazals of masters such as Hāfiz and Sa’ dī, and through her own linguistic and rhetorical skill, she amplifies the impact of her words on the reader’s mind.”³⁶ For example, in her beautiful and enchanting ghazal “Bulūr’ dukān,” Mishkātī borrows the iconic phrase Alā yā ayyuhā al-sāqī (O cupbearer...) from Hāfiz’s first ghazal and uses it in the opening verse of her own:

O cupbearer, bring that essence of life

For I have wandered far from my companions in these mountains and deserts³⁷

In another ghazal, Mishkātī borrows the phrase silsilah-’i mūy-i dūst (The chain-like tress of the beloved) from Hāfiz’s ghazal:

The chain-like tress of the beloved has stolen my rest

And now my life is burdened with sorrow and unrest³⁸

The model for Mishkātī’s ghazal “Ay kāsh” (I wish) is undoubt-

³⁴Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah, 95.

³⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 38, 43, 86.

³⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 89.

³⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 89.

³⁸Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah, 87.

³⁹Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah, 87.

⁴⁰Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah, 65.

⁴¹The ghazal by Hāfiz begins with *Sitārah-ī bi-dirakhshīd va māh-i majlis shud / Dil-i ramīdah-ī mā rā rafīq va mūnis shud* (“A star shone brightly and became the moon of the gathering; it became a friend and companion to our restless heart”). Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz Shīrāzī, *Dīvān*, ed. Qāsim Ghanī and Muhammad Qazvīnī (Tehran: Zavvār, 1320/1941), 113.

⁴²Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 58, 86, 93, 115, 132, 136. This poem is an example of *tazmīn* of a ghazal by Hāfiz, and the verses of Hāfiz’s ghazal are used as a refrain between the stanzas of this ghazal. Sample poem by Ashraf: *Nigār-i man kih dar dāmash asīram / Nabāshad ghayr-i fikrash dar zamīram / Chih khvush ān dam kih dar fikrash bimīram / Bi-tīgham gar zanad dastash nagīram / Va gar tīram zanad minnat pazīram* (My beloved, in whose snare I am trapped / No thought but hers is in my mind / How sweet is the moment I die in her thought! / If she strikes me with her arrow, I will not defend myself / And if she shoots her arrow at me, I will accept it gratefully). See Mishkātī, Tālār-i āyīnah, 136.

⁴³Mushīr Salīmī, *Zanān-i sukhanvār az yak hizār sāl pīsh tā imrūz kih bih zabān-i Fārsī sukhan guftah’and*, 9.

⁴⁴Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah: Tahlīl va barrasī-i ash’ār-i bānū Ashraf Mishkātī Gilānī*, 86, 102–103, 136.

edly the exquisite ghazal by Hāfiz, which includes the following lines:

May your beauty ever grow,

And your face, each year, like tulips glow³⁹

Mishkātī’s response echoes this style:

I wish your gaze would fall on me

And your heart would know my misery⁴⁰

Her ghazal “Nigār-i man” (My idol) also constitutes a complete *tazmīn* (quotation) from Hāfiz’s ghazal.⁴¹ Moreover, the ideas expressed in Mishkātī’s “Bāgh’bān va gul” (The gardener and the rose) resonate with the sentiment found in Hāfiz’s renowned ghazal that opens with:

If the gardener delights in the rose for but five fleeting days

The nightingale must bleed long from separation’s thorn⁴²

Sa‘dī, the renowned AH 7th/13th-century Persian poet, was another literary figure whose poetic style, particularly in the ghazal form, exerted a notable influence on Mishkātī. In composing her moralistic *masnavī* “Nigīn-i girān’māyah” (The precious gem), Mishkātī draws not only upon the epic grandeur of Firdawsī’s poetry but also from the ethical and didactic tone of Sa‘dī’s *Būstān*.⁴³ Her elegant ghazal “Afsūs” (Alas) is a complete *tazmīn* of a ghazal by Sa‘dī, from which one couplet is quoted below. Likewise, in “Dil’dādah-ī daryā” (Lover of the sea), considered one of her finest ghazals, the stylistic and thematic influence of Sa‘dī’s celebrated ghazal is both evident and undeniable.⁴⁴

Vaqtī dil-i sawdā-yī mī’raft bih būstān’hā



Bī khvīsh-tanam kardī bū-yi gul va rayhān'hā

When my restless heart wandered to the gardens

The scent of flowers and basil made me lose myself⁴⁵

Mā-rā kih tū mī'bīnī būdīm nah insān'hā

Bad qāmat-i man sarvī dar taraf-i gulistān'hā

When you look at us, we were not mere humans

My slender figure was a cypress in the gardens⁴⁶

Mishkātī also drew inspiration from the works of Rūmī, the great mystical poet of the AH 7th/13th century. Her “Bāgh'bān va gul” reflects this influence. In addition to being inspired by Hāfiz’s ghazals, Mishkātī was influenced by Rūmī’s Masnavī. The similarity between Mishkātī’s “Bāgh'bān va gul” and Rūmī’s masnavīs lies primarily in theme and content, both of which emphasize detachment from the ephemeral world. Furthermore, one of Mishkātī’s ghazals, titled “Dil” (Heart), bears a notable resemblance to Rūmī’s ghazal in terms of melody, structural balance, and thematic resonance:⁴⁷

Go, O friends, fetch the beloved to me

Bring me for a moment the elusive idol

While this discussion focuses on those whose impact on Mishkātī’s poetry was most significant, she was certainly influenced by other prominent poets as well. For example, Mishkātī’s masnavīs and ghazals at times evoke the eloquence and beauty of verses by Manūchihri Dāmghānī and Khāqānī Shirvānī.⁴⁸ Additionally, her poetic dialogue “Abr va gul” (Cloud and flower) bears thematic and conceptual resemblance to the dialogue “Māhī va āb” (Fish and water) by Vahshī Bāfqī.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Mushrif al-Dīn Muslih Sa'dī Shirāzī, *Ghazaliyāt in Kulliyāt-i Sa'dī*, ed. Muhammad 'Alī Furūghī (Tehran, Burūkhīm, 1318/1937), 13.

⁴⁶Mishkātī, *Tālār-i āyinah*, 72.

⁴⁷Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyinah*, 28, 58.

⁴⁸Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyinah*, 132.

⁴⁹Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyinah*, 47, 55.

⁵¹Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 194.

⁵²Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 183.

⁵³Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 159.

In addition to classical poets, Mishkāṭī was also influenced by some of her contemporaries, most notably Parvīn I‘tisāmī. Both poets belonged to the same literary period, and since poets of the same era often share stylistic parallels, distinguishing between their works is not always straightforward. The similarity between Mishkāṭī’s and I‘tisāmī’s poetry is particularly noticeable in their poetic dialogues, with both composing a piece with the same title and theme: “Gul va khār” (The flower and the thorn).⁵⁰

Know you not, O Sun, who embody greatness and might

That you grieve the heart of the lesser?⁵¹

Some of the poems in *Tālār-i āyīnah* evoke the poetry of Īraj Mīrzā, particularly the poem “Mīhr-i mādar” (Mother’s love), which, in its vocabulary, literary form, and thematic content, clearly demonstrates the influence of Īraj Mīrzā’s poem “Mādar” (Mother) on Mishkāṭī’s work.

An aged mother had a youthful son

Who paid no mind to what his aged mother would command⁵²

Mishkāṭī’s masnavī “Kinār-i sāhil-i daryā” (By the shore of the sea) recalls a poem by Īraj Mīrzā with a similar theme, in which a lover travels with his beloved:

One lover journeyed with his beloved

And passed by the shore of the sea⁵³

In her poem “Murghak-i pāy’bastah” (The tied bird), Mishkāṭī engages with a ghazal by Rahī Mu‘ayyirī, which opens with the following lines:

Without you, I am like branch torn away



A crop struck down by blight and decay⁵⁴

⁵⁴Mishkātī, *Tālār-i āyīnah*, 63.

Based on this ghazal, Mishkātī composes a poetic imitation, writing:

⁵⁵Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 125.

Without you, I am like a broken branch

⁵⁶Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 254.

Like a bird with its feet bound⁵⁵

⁵⁷Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 242.

Mishkātī's Poetic Style

⁵⁸Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 249.

Vocabulary

Ashraf Mishkātī, influenced by the great poets of Persian literature, makes extensive use of refined and frequently employed literary vocabulary commonly found in other poetic collections (sg. *dīvān*). The central theme of her lyrical poetry is *ishq* (love), with the rest of the vocabulary in her poetry organized around and serving to express this concept:

Love has returned and gripped my heart

It has returned and once again longed for you⁵⁶

Alongside the theme of love, the motif of lamenting the beloved's betrayal figures prominently in her poetry. In many of her verses, she expresses sorrow over the beloved's cruelty, which leads to separation and longing.

I said, "What treachery you are! Alas, the sorrow of separation!"

The dew upon the petals turned to tears from her eyes.⁵⁷

O unfaithful beloved, so deep was your cruelty

What hope remains? How can I trust your vows and promises?⁵⁸

⁵⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 171.

⁶⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 180.

⁶¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 104.

⁶²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 105.

⁶³Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 221.

Alas, the rose's betrayal weighs heavy on my heart

What strength have I to bear the rose's parting?⁵⁹

In Mishkāṭī's poems, the beloved, at times symbolizing God and frequently referred to as jānān (beloved), appears with notable frequency:

I have given my soul to the path of the Beloved

Have mercy, for I have fallen.⁶⁰

I took the bird of my heart to the Beloved's abode

How deep is my soul's pain from the separation of my body.⁶¹

If we depart from the street of the Beloved

It is with hope we journey toward the Truth⁶²

In most of Mishkāṭī's poems, the depiction of nature holds a special place. The beautiful natural landscape of northern Iran—her place of refuge—and the influence of Persian-speaking poets have contributed to the frequent presence of nature-related vocabulary in her verses. Influenced by her literary predecessors, Mishkāṭī employs a rich lexicon that includes words such as bāgh (garden), būstān (garden), chaman (meadow), gulzār (rose garden), nakhl (palm tree), as well as names of a variety of flowers like gul-i surkh (red rose), sūsan (lily), yāsaman (jasmine), arghavān (redbuds or Judas-tree), nargis (daffodil), among others, feature prominently in her poetry.

What flower could compare to your precious world?

Neither the daffodil, nor the jasmine, and nor the Judas-tree⁶³

Ashraf, behold what a bounty of blossoms is offered in honor



of your arrival Daffodil and wild rose, blooming in abundance tonight⁶⁴

⁶⁴Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 221.

Friends, drink wine, for it is Farvardīn

⁶⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 263.

The season of dogrose, jasmine and wild rose⁶⁵

⁶⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 219.

One of the frequently recurring elements of Mishkāṭī's poetry is the use of floral imagery like tuberose (*Polianthes tuberosa*) and daisy (*Leucanthemum*), which symbolically refer to the names of her children.

⁶⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 235.

⁶⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 248.

There are daisies, lilies, and tuberoses

Be my cypress, tall and grand⁶⁶

It is the season of roses, tuberoses, and lilies

Our hearts long to behold the blossoms⁶⁷

This delightful fragrance, so sweet from the tuberose

Perhaps it emanates from your dark, scented hair⁶⁸

In addition to the frequency of floral and verdant imagery, references to the sea and the shore are also prominent in her poetry. These motifs reflect the geographical landscape surrounding her place of residence in Gilan (near the Caspian Sea). The natural environment clearly shaped the lexicon and imagery of her work:

I shall make my eyes the sea for the sake of your delight

But if you never pass by the shore, what am I to do?⁶⁹

I said, "O heart, let us turn toward the shore"

⁷⁰Rūhīfār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 198.

That night, the moon and the sea remembered us once more⁷⁰

⁷¹Rūhīfār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 249.

My heart sits waiting at the crossroads

⁷²Rūhīfār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 257.

Longing for your arrival by the sea's edge⁷¹

⁷³Rūhīfār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 238.

From this perspective, Mishkāṭī praises the city of Gilan for its breathtaking natural beauty.

⁷⁴Rūhīfār, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 287.

Blessed be that verdant meadow and plain of Gilan

Where is a city that could rival Gilan?

Oh, how joyous the day I shall sit once more

By the shores of Gilan's boundless sea
Tuberose, lily, aptenia

And daisy are the treasures of Gilan⁷²

O pure and gentle north, my greetings to your land

To Gilan's fair city, to its gardens grand
To the roaring sea and the golden sand

To your ever-raining skies, a salute so grand⁷³

In addition to Gilan, Mishkāṭī also evokes various cities in her poetry, recalling personal memories and impressions tied to each place.

Washington, like Gilan, is lush and green

A land of boundless grace, a sight serene⁷⁴

Paris, the city of love, more dazzling than before



A fair young bride among nations evermore⁷⁵

⁷⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 286.

Chalus, here we stand, so near to Shahsavār

⁷⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 286.

The autumn season here is like spring reborn

⁷⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 235.

A hundred memories come to mind from the city of Shahsavār

⁷⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 240.

Every corner of this city is a memento of a friend⁷⁶

⁷⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 263.

In addition to the presence of specific place names in Mish-kāfī's poetry, certain new words, in line with the themes of her work and the era in which she wrote, also appear throughout her work. This incorporation of modern vocabulary, alongside the frequent use of traditional Persian literary language, lends her poetry a distinctive freshness. Words such as tayyārah (airplane), māshīn (car), and duktur (doctor) are among the modern terms found in her verse:

Would that the earth belonged to your car

That face I see, may it be your radiant visage⁷⁷

Such language echoes again in the poetry of the time:⁷⁸

Board the airplane and come to me

Be the beloved of my sky-like face

Forever, eternally joyful

Stay beside me, O noble doctor⁷⁹

The intersection of classical and modern vocabulary is striking in the following verse:

The difference between my beloved's distance and yours, O Sa'adī,

⁸⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 22.

⁸¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 255.

⁸²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 207.

⁸³Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 209.

⁸⁴Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 208.

Is the swiftness of the airplane and the slow pace of the litter⁸⁰

One of the commonly used words of her time is the word khush-gil (beautiful or lovely), which appears frequently in her poetry.

It is spring, so cast your gaze upon the garden

The garden's courtyard has become as lovely as a beautiful garment⁸¹

In addition to incorporating specific place names in her poetry, Mishkātī integrates personal names, reflecting her deep affection for her family and friends. This practice not only personalizes her work but also adds a unique and original dimension to her verses. For example, she addresses her sister with poignant verses:

O sister, why do you now rest in the heart of the earth?

You who once comforted me, the adornment of my days yet unfulfilled! ⁸²

In another touching tribute, Mishkātī dedicates a poem to her friend Louisa:

This poem, O Louisa, is now for you

Tonight, the petals of roses have turned into offerings at your feet⁸³

She also expresses sympathy for a grieving friend:

O Lord, in the grief of Bāqir

Bestow upon Nāhīd your solace and patience⁸⁴

The arrival of a dear friend brings her joy:



May I be healed at last of pain and sorrow

⁸⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 214.

For dear Giti has come to see me once more⁸⁵

⁸⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 222.

Mishkāṭī's admiration for her friend Maryam is evident:

⁸⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 171.

O Maryam, you are like the tuberose

⁸⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 154.

God hath adorned you with purity⁸⁶

⁸⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 206.

Among the words introduced in Mishkāṭī's poetry that are rarely found in the works of other poets are *shūkh va shang* (playful and lively), *shināgar* (swimmer), *shukulāt* (chocolate), *king*, and *pāchīdah* (scattered/sprinkled). Each term has been incorporated into her verses in harmony with the thematic context.

⁹⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 184.

⁹¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 234.

By God, my beautiful tulip

My playful and lively daffodil and jasmine!⁸⁷

Silver dust has scattered upon the earth

The old mother, the firmament, has worn the individual away⁸⁸

The blackened one, like a king, is superior

Among hundreds of whites, he alone stands above⁸⁹

A doll and two boxes of chocolate

A gift the mother brought back from her journey⁹⁰

With dear Media, I would become a swimmer

In the heart of the ocean's waves—oh, what a cherished memory!⁹¹

⁹²Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 250.

⁹³Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 244.

⁹⁴Rūhīfār, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 244.

Literary Devices

Like many other Persian poets, Mishkāṭī makes extensive use of rhetorical devices, which enhance the elegance and artistic quality of her poetry. Among these, the most frequently used is simile (*tashbīh*). In the following lines, she uses similes to express purity and spiritual detachment:

Free from the adornments of the world

Pure, like the radiant sun, we move forward⁹²

She also draws on the imagery of nature and divine love to convey depth of feeling:

No palm has borne fruit more abundant

Than the palm of love in the world of His creation⁹³

Drawing on classical themes, she compares separation from the beloved to the legendary departure of the Queen of Sheba:

You leave me like the morning breeze (*sabā*, or the Queen of Sheba) to go to Solomon

Go, my friend, for he is Solomon, and you are (the Queen of) Sheba⁹⁴

Mishkāṭī's metaphors follow the tradition of classical Persian poets, and the use of innovative or unusual metaphors is less prominent. Common metaphorical elements in her verses include *sarv* (cypress) as a symbol for the beloved's stature, *nargis* (daffodil) as a metaphor for the beloved's eyes, and *māh* (moon) as a representation of the beloved's face. These metaphors, which are used abundantly in her poetry, are employed with both emotional resonance and aesthetic grace. For example, in expressing longing and separation, Mishkāṭī draws the



moon into the verse, and in describing the beloved's beauty and presence in the natural world, she writes:

Both the charm of my rose garden and the splendor of the meadow

That graceful stature of his, that enchanting daffodil of his

At night, I seek tidings of his face from the moon in the sky

I ask the cypress of the garden about the graceful stature of my beloved⁹⁵

In imagining reunion and hope, she writes:

If only you would suddenly appear, so I might behold the radiance of your moon-like face

And with the union of your luminous face, you would open the door to fortune⁹⁶

In one notable example, a novel metaphor appears in her poetry.

O iron bird, for your heart too is made of iron

The one you carry away is my moon-faced flower⁹⁷

Here, the "iron bird" serves as a metaphor for an airplane that separates her from a loved one. This image reflects a creative engagement with modern themes while maintaining poetic sensibility.

One of the striking aesthetic elements in her poetry is repetition. This includes the repetition of phonemes, words, and phrases, often used in the form of *radīf* (refrain). This device contributes to the musicality and emotional impact of her verses and appears frequently across some of her poems. For example, in

⁹⁵Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 253.

⁹⁶Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 251.

⁹⁷Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 166.

⁹⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 255.

⁹⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 249.

¹⁰⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 193.

a verse that emphasizes omnipresence and spiritual unity, she writes:

Har kujā rū āvaram bīnam tū'ī

Ham tū'ī ham ghayr-i tū bātil shudah

Wherever I turn, I find you there

You are both the one and, beyond you, all else is false⁹⁸

Another example, rich in repetition and thematic intensity, expresses love, devotion, and surrender:

Yār-i siyah' chashmān tū'ī, marjān-i man sultan tū'ī

Farmāndih-'i farmān tū'ī, man bandah-'i farmān-i tū

You, the dark-eyed beloved, are my coral; you are the sultan

You are the commander of command, and I am the servant of your command⁹⁹

In the following verse, repetition adds to the visual beauty and poetic rhythm as Mishkāfī describes the beloved's hair:

Khudāvandī kih zulf-i yār-i mā-rā

Shikan andar shikan andar shikan kard

The Lord who fashioned the locks of our beloved

With fold upon fold upon fold¹⁰⁰

The repetition of phrases serves as a notable stylistic feature in Mishkāfī's poetry. The phrase *khavar dārī* (do you know) recurs throughout many verses of this poem, *har kujā hastam* (wher-



ever I am) appears repeatedly in the poem “Āsmān va akhtar va māh-i man-ī” (You are my sky, my star, my moon). The refrain *bīchārah mādar* (poor mother) is used to powerful emotional effect in the poem of the same title. These repeated elements reinforce the emotional intensity and musical rhythm of her work.

Another prominent literary device in *Mishkāṭī*’s poetry is *talmīh* (allusion), the reference to well-known stories or narratives. It is another technique that poets employ to enhance the aesthetic quality of their poems. While many poets utilize this device to deepen the resonance of their verse, what distinguishes *Mishkāṭī* is that her *talmīhs* predominantly revolve around the tales of *Yūsuf* and *Zulaykhā* (*Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*) and *Laylī* and *Majnūn* (*Laylī va Majnūn*). These well-established love stories from Persian literary tradition provide a rich intertextual layer to her work. For example, *Mishkāṭī* draws on the pathos of the *Yūsuf* and *Zulaykhā* story in the following verses:

Zulaykhā, they are selling your *Yūsuf*

Have you passed through the marketplace or not?¹⁰¹

Alas, never again did Zulaykhā behold

That moon of Canaan, now lost from her sight¹⁰²

My heart, like that long-vanished child

Falls into longing for the moon of Canaan

O Lord, tell Zulaykhā

Why Joseph has been cast into prison¹⁰³

In several verses, *Mishkāṭī* draws on the emotional depth of the stories. The recurrence of this allusion in numerous poems, including “*Bihisht-i Zahrā*” (The garden of *Zahrā*), “*Khūn*

¹⁰¹Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 254.

¹⁰²Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 236.

¹⁰³Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 218.

¹⁰⁴Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 134.

¹⁰⁵Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 163.

¹⁰⁶Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 236.

¹⁰⁷Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 226.

kunam dilam” (I will make my heart bleed), “Māh va daryā” (The moon and the sea), “Dīl’ dādah-’i daryā” (Lover of the sea), “Bulūr’ dukān,” “Bā man az dar va javāhir’ hā bigū” (Speak to me of doors and jewels), “Zanjīr-i havādis” (The chain of events), “Khvāb-i parīshān” (Disturbed dream), and “Tanhā dilam” (Only my heart). One example of this allusion appears in the following verse:

I am certain that, in the end, like Majnūn

You will cast me into the desert, mad with love¹⁰⁴

Tazād (antithesis) is another stylistic device employed by Mishkātī, as by many Persian poets, to enhance the artistic quality of her verse. Through stark contrasts, she conveys complexity, tension, and layered meaning. Consider the following examples:

You turn others’ homes into rose gardens,

While friends sit in darkness, enemies shine in light

Oil, O you who kindle homes

Oil, O you who burn down households

Oil, the source of joy for all

Oil, both death and life to all¹⁰⁵

Time passed like a troubled dream

At times difficult, at times easy¹⁰⁶

When you reflect on human lives, the wheel of fate is ever turning

At times it smiles with love, and at times it strikes with hatred¹⁰⁷



Rhyme (Qāfiyah) and Refrain (Radīf)

Mishkātī's poems, including her fragments (sg. qit'ah), ghazals, and quatrains (sg. rubā'ī), are marked by technically sound rhyming. She adheres to correct rhyme schemes, avoiding structural flaws. One of her notable poetic innovations lies in her creative use of extended and sometimes unique refrain (radīf). In her ghazals, she employs extended, fluid, and idiomatic refrains drawn from the vernacular of her time, which enhances the literary and aesthetic value of her work. For example, the phrase *agar bugzārad* (if it allows) functions as a refrain in a poem of the same title:

I will cover my eyes from that curly hair

If the morning breeze allows it¹⁰⁸

Similarly, in the poem "Māh va sitārah" (The Moon and the star), Mishkātī uses *az mā salām bādat* (may our salutations be upon you) in the poem "Māh va sitārah" (The Moon and the star):

My dear Mitrā, may our salutations be upon you

I am sorrowful from your separation; may our salutations be upon you¹⁰⁹

The phrase *dil bih man hargiz maband* (never bind your heart to mine) appears as the refrain in a poem of the same name:

I am from a distant land, never bind your heart to mine

If I have set my heart on you, never bind your heart to mine¹¹⁰

In the poem "Rasm-i shab" (The custom of the night), the word *mast* (drunken) is beautifully employed as a refrain:

¹⁰⁸Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 237.

¹⁰⁹Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 226.

¹¹⁰Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 239.

¹¹¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 219.

¹¹²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 213.

¹¹³Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 213.

¹¹⁴Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 228.

Last night, I went toward my beloved, to the garden, while drunken

I saw him in the garden, lying in a corner, my drunken beloved¹¹¹

The word daryā (sea), which recurs frequently throughout Mishkātī's poetry, appears as a refrain in a ghazal of the same title:

I have come back to your side, O sea

To be your lover and companion, O sea¹¹²

In another poem, addressed to Māndānā, Mishkātī uses her name in a shortened form (Māndī) as the refrain:

Ashraf has remained sorrowful from your separation, dear Māndī

And has become weary from your absence, dear Māndī ¹¹³

Content of Mishkātī's Poetry

A significant portion of Mishkātī's poetry is dedicated to her relatives, with each ghazal or piece crafted in response to specific circumstances, reflecting her deep affection and attachment to them. Among these, the theme of mother appears most frequently. Mishkātī composed poems such as "Vafā-yi mādar" (The mother's loyalty), "Bīchārah mādar" (Poor mother), "Bih yād-i mādar" (In memory of mother), and "Āsmān" (The sky), all of which mourn and honor her mother.

The mother, who is the hope of my life

Is the beloved of the God of the heavens.¹¹⁴

Mishkātī often refers to her children or the distance from them in many of her verses, using their names as the subject of her poetry:



Speak of tuberosa (Maryam) and daisy (Mīnā)

¹¹⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 195.

Speak of the rosy face of dear Gītī¹¹⁵

¹¹⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 193.

Tell my dear Khusraw and Parvīz

¹¹⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 193.

My heart spoke to me of them a hundred tales.

¹¹⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 251.

From the union with my sweet Mītrā and Āyd
My God has bestowed great kindness upon me¹¹⁶

¹¹⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 205.

I wish to see Maryam (tuberosa) and Mīnā (daisy) in the world
(Gītī)

¹²⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 203.

The very flowers I once nurtured, now I gather

May I once more behold the cypress in the garden

And gaze upon the stature and grace of dear Khusraw¹¹⁷

Without you, beauty lends no grace to this home, O Gītī

The house is splendid, yet its true radiance was you.¹¹⁸

Mishkāfī frequently references her brother in her poetry. She composed the elegy “I‘tisām āmadah” (I‘tisām has come) in mourning his passing.

O morning breeze, tell my brother Sālār

That in this world, no one is as kind to me as he¹¹⁹

By your life, dear brother, as long as I breathe

I shall always remain indebted to your love¹²⁰

May my life be sacrificed for you, beloved brother

¹²¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 244.

¹²²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 234.

¹²³Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 150.

¹²⁴Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 239.

Ashraf’s devotion to you knows no bounds¹²¹

Mishkāfī also composed numerous poems on various occasions or as expressions of affection for her friends, often mentioning them by name and centering the poem around them:

With dear Media, I would become a swimmer

In the heart of the ocean’s waves—oh, what a cherished memory!¹²²

She also composed the poem “Akhtar-i man” (My star) in longing for her sister during a time of separation:

O celestial star of my fortune, O beloved one

My sister, you are the crown upon my head

After family, homeland and a deep love for Iran hold a special place in her poetry:

Every heart takes delight in its own longing, yet in my mind there is no desire

But the progress of Iran—this is the hope of us women¹²³

I am a lover of pure Iran; never bind your heart to mine

Born of its water and soil, never bind your heart to mine¹²⁴

In Iran, Mishkāfī’s deep affection for Gilan, its nature and people is vividly reflected in her poetry. In the poem “Gilan,” she beautifully expresses her devotion to this land:

Blessed be the meadows and fields of Gilan

What city could ever rival Gilan?



Naught but kindness and sincerity shall you find

¹²⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 225.

Among the noble people of Gilan¹²⁵

¹²⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 238.

In her poem “Salām bar Gīlān” (Greetings to Gilan), Mishkāṭī once again celebrates the natural beauty of the region:

¹²⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 213.

O northern lands, I send greetings to the city of Gilan

¹²⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 245.

Greetings to your flowers, gardens, cypress trees, and fields¹²⁶

The natural beauty of Gilan, its sea, coast, forests, and verdant landscape has left a profound mark on Mishkāṭī’s poetry. Vocabulary and imagery associated with these elements repeatedly appear throughout her poems:

I have come back to your side, O sea

To be your lover and companion, O sea¹²⁷

Mishkāṭī also expresses her deep love for her ancestral land in her masnavī “Tāj-i khvurshīd” (Sun’s crown). She composed it in praise of the picturesque village of Javahir Dasht, which is in the Qasimabad region of Rudsar—her father’s homeland. The nature and beauty of this land are uniquely rendered in Mishkāṭī’s poetry. She pays close attention to her surroundings, using a range of literary devices to craft vivid imagery that brings joy and emotional resonance to her readers. In one poem, she evokes the charm of spring and the intimacy of shared moments with a loved one:

Spring is delightful, and gathering flowers with you makes it even more sweet

On Eid, I yearn to kiss your face and bask in your beauty¹²⁸

In another verse, Mishkāṭī captures the celebratory spirit of

¹²⁹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 225.

¹³⁰Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 224.

¹³¹Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 100.

spring, encouraging her companions to embrace the joy of the season:

Friends, drink wine, for it is Farvardīn

The season of dogrose, jasmine and wild rose

The bride of the meadow adorns her head and face

Scatter flowers at her feet, for this is the essence of spring¹²⁹

She also contrasts the beauty of cultivated gardens with the grandeur of nature, skillfully drawing attention to the natural landscape surrounding her:

Though your garden is quite beautiful, with flowers and beauty abounding

One side boasts of meadows and mountains, while the other meets the sea¹³⁰

Mishkāṭī finds inspiration in a daffodil beside a stream, using it as a metaphor for the captivating beauty of a beloved's eyes:

I see daffodil, drowsy and intoxicated by the stream

And it reminds me of the magical daffodil of your eyes.¹³¹

On the other hand, Mishkāṭī also turns inward, making her, in essence, a poet of both the outer world and inner self. In several of her poems, she laments the sorrow of separation and reproaches betrayal and unfaithfulness:

Do you know that I am gone

My healer says no remedy can save me now?

Do you know that, in the end, the wheel of fate



Has separated you from me, and me from you?¹³²

¹³²Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 242.

I said, “What treachery you are! Alas, the sorrow of separation!”

¹³³Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 250.

The dew upon the petals turned to tears from her eyes

¹³⁴Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 247.

Distance became our torment, he left my side

¹³⁵Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 250.

And from the moon in the sky, perhaps I’ll find a trace of him¹³³

¹³⁶Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 263.

Having endured so much pain and injustice in the world

¹³⁷Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 218.

Ashraf is familiar with the realm of suffering and sorrow¹³⁴

¹³⁸Rūhīfar, Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah, 220.

The endurance of love’s pain and its healing through union is a well-established motif in mystical poetry. This theme recurs with remarkable frequency in Mishkāṭī’s poetry, conveying the poet’s inner sorrow and anguish.

Our pain, for which no remedy exists

The ailing seek their cure in vain.¹³⁵

I have come, O healers, to find a cure

Take pity on the aching heart and seek a solution¹³⁶

Let me die, untouched by healing

For my pain has passed beyond any cure¹³⁷

Why do the healers not cure me?

My suffering is beyond the reach of any remedy¹³⁸

Religious beliefs, love, and devotion to the Shī‘ī Imams are reflected in Mishkāṭī’s poetry. In her poem “Ka‘bah-’i dil’hā”

¹³⁹Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 70–71.

¹⁴⁰Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 109.

¹⁴¹Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 82–84.

(Ka‘bah of the hearts), she engages in an intimate dialogue with God and offers praise to the Ka‘bah, symbolizing spiritual connection and devotion. Similarly, in the poem “Bih sū-yi Ka‘bah” (Towards the Ka‘bah), Mishkātī once again turns to prayers and praises the Ka‘bah, reinforcing her deep bond with the divine. Themes of lamentation and elegy also appear frequently in her poems. For example, in “Yā ‘Alī,” Mishkātī venerates Amīr al-Mu‘minīn (the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Alī), while in poems such as “Salām” (Salutation), “Payām” (Message) and “Mī‘ram” (I go), she offers homage to the eighth Twelver Shī‘ī Imam, Imam Rizā.

Social commentary plays a vital role in her poetry. Issues such as racial injustice are addressed in “Sifīd va siyāh,” while poems like “Tū ay bashar” (You, O human), “Niḡīn-i girān‘māyah” and “Bā man az dar va javāhir‘hā bigū” provide critiques of various forms of social injustice. Mishkātī also explores themes of women’s freedom and rights in poems such as “Tawq-i bandigī” and “Mā nīsvān.”

Mishkātī was concerned with social justice, particularly the oppression of marginalized social classes and, most notably, the injustices faced by women. As a pioneer in the women’s liberation movement, she called on women to stand against tyranny and to demand their rights. In “Shab-i ‘ayd” (The night of the festival), she recounts a true story about an unjust law denies mothers custody of their children and exposes this injustice through literary elegance. Then, in her short poem “Bār ilāhā” (O God!), she turns to divine justice, expressing her anguish and seeking God’s help in the face of such oppression.¹³⁹ Her ghazal “Mā nīsvān” was published in the journal ‘Ālam-i Nīsvān and “Tawq-i bandigī” was published in *Fikr-i Javān* newspaper.¹⁴⁰ In another poem titled “Tu ay bashar,” composed in Washington, she offers a pointed critique of Western powers and their inhumane actions, which reflects her broader awareness of global injustice. She stands out as one of the contemporary poets who addressed such themes in her works.¹⁴¹



In addition to her moral and social concerns, Mishkātī was politically conscious and engaged with contemporary national issues. She composed “Naft va khūn” (Oil and blood) in commemoration of the nationalization of Iran’s oil industry, an event of great historical and political significance.¹⁴²

¹⁴²Rūhīfar, *Sayrī dar tālār-i āyīnah*, 24–25, 57.

Below is a translation of the poem “Barf va zughāl,” which won the Iran-Pakistan Literary Association’s competition in 1958:

A heap of white snow fell down

Upon a pile of black charcoal

When the snow saw that dark face, it said:

“Alas! My body became burdened with misfortune

How strange! Who is this dark-faced beloved?

Staying with him is impossible for me.”

With a smile, the charcoal replied:

“You, embodiment of goodness and god of beauty

Do not regard look upon us with such disdain;

There is no reason for you to cause such an uproar

I, whose face has turned so dark,

Was once a cypress in an unparalleled garden

My shadow was the sanctuary of lovers,

The day of separation and the time of reunion

From the hunter's hand in that meadow,
My branch gave refuge to the gazelle
The love-struck nightingale lamented the flower's cruelty
And carried its complaint to the northern breeze
Until dawn, he sighed and said: 'Alas
I have become enamored with a heedless flower'
Suddenly, the axe of the woodcutter struck, and
I was cast into a pit of darkness
He set such a fire in that furnace
I was burned, and I became charcoal
All this pride, O beloved
Though you have been matchless in kindness and grace
Know that all things, even your radiant fact
Will perish, except for goodness
I am content with the darkening of my face
For it granted me the chance to do good
When you descend and the cold sets in
I will warm the cottage of every sorrowful soul
When I come to the aid of the weak



I have no sorrow for my blackened state

¹⁴³Fakhrā'ī, *Gīlān dar qalam'raw-yi shi'r va adab*, 46.

For nothing in this world, O Ashraf

Has worth, except goodness, to the possessor of perfection¹⁴³