



Urdu Studies

An international, peer-reviewed,
bilingual research journal

ISSN: 2583-8784 (Online)

Vol. 6 | Issue 1 | Year 2026

Pages: 31 - 56

The Wingless Ascent: The Sinai Critique in Urdu Poetry

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Abstract: Hasil-e-Mutala'a: This essay traces a single, sustained argument across centuries of Urdu and Persian poetry: that the mountain of Sinai — where Moses cried *arinī* and fell senseless before the Divine light — was never the final word on the human encounter with the Absolute. Beginning with Amir Khusrau's interiorization of the mountain and Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil's radical claim that Sinai itself is an illusion created by the narrowness of the human vessel, the essay follows this argument through Ghalib's philosophical provocation and his assertion of *ghairat-e-ishq*, Jigar Moradabadi's diagnosis that the light is unchanged and only the inner eye unready, an anonymous poet's devastating question about collective witnessing, Shirwaniya's personal defiance, Behzad Lucknavi's sovereign refusal to burn, Jalal Lucknavi's insistence on rising after every fall, Jafri's collective humanity standing at Sinai's summit, Iqbal's dual positions of disciplined longing and his command for the Divine to appear in a form the human self can sustain, Abdul Hameed Adam's inverted Tūr where the Divine mourns the missed meeting, Dard's two *sh'ers* dissolving the geography of Sinai into the geography of the heart, and Rashk's final silence where even the words *Arinī* and *lan tarānī* dissolve. What emerges is not a polemic against the prophet but a celebration of the human spirit's sovereign capacity — its *maqḍūr*, its sovereign reach — tracing a shift from the human as Maqbool (accepted by grace) to the human as *maqḍūr* (sovereign by nature). The essay ends where it began — with *Arinī* — spoken now not as a desperate plea from the foot of a burning mountain, but as a quiet gesture of recognition between two who were never truly separate.

Keywords: Arinī and Lan Tarānī, Sinai Imaginary, Tajallī (Divine Self-Disclosure), Human Spiritual Capacity, Urdu-Persian Sufi Poetics, Baseerat.

Formerly UGC-CARE Listed since Oct. 2021

Published on October 23, 2026

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Author's Note:

This essay grows out of a long personal engagement with Urdu and Persian classical poetry — and specifically with the way the poets I love most have returned, again and again, to the same charged site: the Mount of Sinai, where Moses encountered the Divine light and fell senseless to the ground. What drew me to this motif was not the theology but the argument concealed within it — a persistent poetic rethinking of the human condition, in which the human being is imagined not merely as a passive recipient of grace, but as a spirit of sovereign reach — whose capacity to behold the Absolute is not a gift, but an earned reality.

The essay began, as essays sometimes do, with a single *sh'er*. It came to me unattributed — anonymous, paperless — arriving the way certain verses do, as if they had always been waiting for me, or arrived in search of me, as Pablo Neruda once described. I do not know where it came from; it appeared unbidden, a sudden flicker from a voice unknown:

ہمیں بھی جلوہ گاہ ناز تک لے کے چلو موسیٰ
تمہیں غش آگیا تو حسن جاناں کون دیکھے گا

hamen bhī jalva-gāh-e-nāz tak le ke chalo mūsā
tumhen ghash ā gayā to husn-e-jānān kaun dekhegā

Take me along to the place where beauty reveals itself in its full radiance, O Musa — for if you faint, who will remain to witness the Beloved?

The question it poses to Moses is so practical, so quietly devastating — *if you faint, who will witness the beauty of the Beloved?* — that it seemed to open a door into something much larger. I found myself returning to this question again and again. Its force lies in its simplicity: if the witness collapses, what becomes of the vision? From that moment, the Sinai episode began to appear not only as a narrative of divine manifestation, but as a problem of perception, endurance, and human capacity.

It was then that the thoughts began to arrive — from the unseen, from *ghaib*, like an ethereal resonance. As Ghalib says:

آتے ہیں غیب سے یہ مضامیں خیال میں

غالب صریر خامہ نوائے سروش ہے
äte hain ghaib se ye mazāmīn khayāl men
ghālib sarīr-e-khāma navā-e-sarosh hai

These themes arrive from the Unseen into my mind — Ghalib, the scratching of the pen is the voice of an angel.

Answering that celestial melody, words began to flow through me like a rising tide. I found my own voice in the quiet intersection of thought and ink; the themes did not just appear, they demanded to be captured. These *mazāmeen-e-khayāl* eventually took me to Aneesa Haroon Shirwaniya’s *sh’er*, and I understood, suddenly, that she had answered the anonymous poet’s question. She *will* witness the beauty; she will not faint. She asserted — ‘Come before me unveiled, and see for Yourself.’

The pages that follow trace this argument across several centuries and voices, from Ghalib’s philosophical provocation to Khwaja Mir Dard’s Sufi certitude.

At its heart, this essay traces a fundamental shift: from the human as *maqbul* — the passive vessel, accepted through Divine mercy — to the human as *maqdūr* — the sovereign soul whose capacity to hold and behold the Divine is inherent and earned through the long fire of longing. The soul is no longer a humble petitioner; it is the sovereign site where the Divine is held by right of its own spiritual caliber. This is what I have come to think of as the Wingless Ascent: the sovereign wingless reach of the human soul - refined through centuries of longing- beyond the very boundaries where even the celestial cannot follow.



There are moments in human history that refuse to stay trapped in their own time. They echo — quietly, persistently — within the corridors of the soul, refusing to fade away. One such moment unfolds on a lonely mountain peak where a Prophet stands before the Divine and utters a request so simple, yet so absolute: *arinī* — Show Yourself to me. This wasn’t just a request; it was the absolute breaking point of a life’s longing the moment where desire turns into a demand, where *shauq* becomes *faryād*. The Divine response is equally absolute: *lan tarāni* — You cannot see Me. And then the lightning strikes Sinai — the mountain receiving in Moses’s place what Moses himself could not endure — the rock burns and crumbles, and the Prophet falls senseless

to the ground. It is from this moment — this refusal, this collapse, this gap between the human cry and the Divine withdrawal — that Urdu poetry has never quite looked away.

Before we dive into the critique, we have to pause and look at what this moment actually was — and what the poets felt it demanded in response. For the poets of the Urdu tradition, the Divine reaction to that single cry of *arinī* was not merely overwhelming; it was, in a profound sense, disproportionate. Mohammad Baqar Shams frames this reaction not as a terrifying display of majesty, but as a quiet, incredulous reproach aimed directly at the Divine itself:

بجلی گرائی طور جلایا اڑائے ہوش

اتنا جلال اک ارنی کے سوال پر

bijlī girā'ī tūr jalāyā uṛāyehosh
itnā jalāl ik arinī ke savāl par

Lightning was hurled, the mountain was set ablaze, consciousness was stolen away— all this fury, all this *jalāl*, all this assertion of overwhelming Divine majesty, for a single request from one who loved. The word *itnā* — so much — is the pivot of the entire *she'r*. It is not a statement of awe but an almost whispered reproach: *was all this really necessary?* The poet does not deny the Divine power; he questions its proportion. He frames Divine not as a receptive Beloved responding to love, but as an authority asserting overwhelming might over a lover's most intimate cry. And yet — and this is what makes the critique compassionate rather than merely defiant — Moses was not being reckless. He had no clue what his love would unleash. Qamar Jalalvi captures this quiet devastating pathos perfectly.

موسیٰ سمجھے تھے ارماں نکل جائے گا

یہ خبر ہی نہ تھی طور جل جائے گا

mūsā samajhe the armān nikal jāyegā
ye khabar hī na thī tūr jal jāyegā

Moses believed, in all innocence, that the encounter would bring beautiful release — that his longing would finally find its fulfillment, that *armān nikal jā'yegā*, the desire would be fulfilled and released. He had no idea that the mountain itself would burn. This is not the portrait of a prophet who overreached; it is the tragic portrait of a lover completely undone by the sheer sincerity of his love. The wave of

passion that carried Moses toward the peak was not a fleeting impulse but a defining, escalating movement of love — each experience of the Divine not satisfying the longing but deepening it. This was not a calculated choice or a logical decision. As Allama Iqbal beautifully observes, it was a magnetic, involuntary pull of the soul — a surrender to a force greater than the self:

کھنچے خود بخود جانبِ طور موسیٰ
کشش تیری اے شوقِ دیدار کیا تھی

khinche khud-ba-khud jānib-e-tūr mūsā
kashish terī ai shauq-e-dīdār kyā thī

Moses was drawn toward Sinai not of his own accord — O longing for the Divine vision, what a powerful, irresistible pull you possess. Since Moses was drawn by nothing more than an irresistible, involuntary pull of love — since the *arinī* was not a demand but a helpless cry — the question the tradition poses to the Divine becomes not merely urgent but unanswerable by any logic except love's own.

Rana Aamir Liaquat captures the nature of that pull with a question that the entire essay turns on:

موسیٰ کو سمتِ طور جو اک موج لے گئی
وہ انتہائے شوق تھی یا ابتداءِ عشق

mūsā ko samt-e-tūr jo ik mauj le ga'ī
voh intihā-e-shauq thī yā ibtidā-e- 'ishq

Was it the end of longing or the beginning of love? Was Moses's journey to Sinai the culmination of his desire — its outermost limit, the point of *intihā* beyond which *shauq* cannot go — the moment when longing had reached the very edge of what longing can bear? Or was it, in fact, only the *ibtidā*, the first step of a love that had barely begun, a love so vast that the faint at Sinai was merely its opening tremor? The question is not merely philosophical; it is the question that launches the Sinai Critique. If Moses's *arinī* was the *ibtidā*, the beginning, then his fainting was not the end of the story. It was only the first movement of something far larger — a journey that the poets of this tradition would carry forward, voice by voice, across the centuries.

In the vast landscape of Urdu aesthetics, the encounter between the Prophet Musa and the Divine Light on Mount Sinai — *Koh-e-Tūr* — has served as more than a simple religious narrative. It is a profound

philosophical metaphor for the limits of human perception, and equally, for the extraordinary latent capacity that lies just beyond those limits. In classical Urdu-Persian poetics this encounter instantiates the Talib-Matloob dynamic — the eternal interplay between the Seeker and the Sought, in which the human soul, as the restless *tālib*, is driven by an agonizing longing to perceive the ultimate *Matlūb*, the Divine. Yet across the centuries, this motif -the restless collision between human desire and the transcendent distance of the Divine - has evolved from a story of prophetic awe into a sophisticated and cumulative critique: of human capacity, of the burden of consciousness, and ultimately of the radical authority of the self.

But before we step into the Urdu tradition proper, we must acknowledge the Persian roots from which it grows — for the Sinai Critique did not begin with Ghalib. It was seeded centuries earlier, in the Sufi poetry of the old Persian masters. They were the ones who pulled off the first - and perhaps the most radical act in this entire lineage. They moved the mountain - not by shifting stone and earth, but by bringing its massive landscape into the architecture of the human heart.

In a verse widely attributed to Amir Khusrau — the great Sufi poet-musician of the Delhi Sultanate, disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya, and one of the earliest voices to bring Persian mystical thought into the Indian Sufi tradition — the geographical shift is complete:

طور تجلی در مرا جلوۂ جاناں در مرا
موسی و قتم تا ابد بر پائے حسنم متصل

tūr-e-tajallī dar mirā, jalva-e-jānān dar mirā
mūsā-e-vaqtam tā-abad, bar-pā-e-ḥusnam muttasil

The Sinai of Manifestation is within my door; the glory of the Beloved is within my door. I am the Moses of my own time, until eternity, connected forever to the beauty that stands before me. Khusrau accomplishes here something that no amount of dense theological argument could ever achieve: he completely erases the distance between the seeker and the mountain by pulling it entirely inside himself. The *Tūr* is no longer a distant desert peak in the Sinai Peninsula; it is the literal threshold of the human heart. The *tajallī* is no longer a lightning bolt striking from the heavens; it is the constant, *muttasil* — unbroken, permanently connected — presence of the Beloved within the lover's own *dar*, his own door and dwelling. Moses

had to travel to the mountain and there he collapsed and became unconscious. Khusrau on the other hand declares himself a permanent witness — not overwhelmed by a single catastrophic encounter but sustained by a continuous, living connection. If the ancient mountain burnt to ashes, Khusrau subtly implies it was simply because stone lacks the soft fluidity of the heart. The human heart, because it is liquid with love, can quietly absorb the very fire that stone cannot survive.

This interiorisation reaches its most philosophically precise expression in the Persian master Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil — whose influence on Urdu poetry, and on Ghalib in particular simply cannot be overstated. Ghalib called Bedil his *ustād*, his master, and the debt is nowhere more obvious than in the Sinai argument. Bedil's contribution to the lineage is the most radical of all: he declares the mountain itself to be a total illusion:

بہ طور شعلہ افسر بہ نگاہ این و آں منزل
طلسم بستگی ظرف ما طور است پنداری

ba-tūr-e-shu'la afsar bā-nigāh-e-īn-o-ān manzil
tilism-e-bastagī-e-zarf-e-mā tūr-ast-pindārī

You imagine that Mount Sinai is a distant place of flaming revelation. In truth, the mountain is merely a *tilism* — a magic spell, an illusion — created by the *bastagī-e-zarf*, the narrow constriction of our own human capacity. The Divine is always manifesting. The light is always present. What creates the appearance of a distant, terrifying mountain isn't actually the overwhelming magnitude of the Divine but the smallness of our own vessel. Moses didn't collapse because the Divine was too bright; he fainted because his perception was still trapped in the rigid duality — an *I* still staring outward at a *Thou*, a self completely separate from the very light it sought. When the Zarf expands, when the vessel deepens and opens through the long practice of love and surrender, you don't need to climb the mountain because the mountain simply doesn't exist anymore. And it is precisely this insight — this Bedilian metaphysics of the expanding vessel — that Ghalib inherits when he writes that the lightning should have fallen on the lover rather than on stone. Bedil provided the blueprint; Ghalib built the argument upon it.

To understand this argument fully, we must begin with *tāb* — a word that carries within it both luminosity and endurance, a glow-strength that is at once the capacity to receive light and the resilience

not to be destroyed by it. It is the foundational term of this entire inquiry. Mirza Ghalib anchors the discourse with a *sh'er* that renders the very act of seeing as a staggering weight:

صد جلوہ رو برو ہے جو مژگاں اٹھائیے
طاقت کہاں کہ دید کا احساں اٹھائیے

sad jalva rū-ba-rū hai jo mizgān uṭhā'īye
tāqat kahān ke dīd kā eḥsān uṭhā'īye

Here Ghalib redefines seeing not as passive reception but as a burden almost too immense to bear. The term *sad jalwa* — a hundred manifestations, or countless — suggests that the universe is not occasionally visited by the Divine presence; it is saturated with it. Every lifting of the eyelash (*mizgaan*) brings one face to face with the Infinite. Yet Ghalib does not celebrate this. He admits a lack of *taaqat* — strength, the necessary Taab — that finds the very gift of vision (*deed ka ehsān*) too crushing to carry. The word *ehsān* is crucial here: it means both grace and indebtedness simultaneously. Beauty, in Ghalib's reading, becomes a debt — an overwhelming favor that the human eye, trembling always at the threshold of excess, cannot fully receive without being undone by it. How crushing, then, the gift of vision itself can be — how the mere act of beholding the Divine becomes a weight the human eye trembles to carry.

It is at precisely this point — where the human eye trembles before the weight of what is perpetually present — that Jigar Moradabadi offers what may be the most precise diagnosis in the entire tradition:

وہی طور ہے وہی روشنی وہی رنگ جلوہ طور ہے
مگر ایک چشم بصیر ہو جو شریک لذت طور ہو

vahī tūr hai vahī roshnī vahī rang-e-jalva-e-tūr hai
magar ek chashm-e-basīr ho jo sharīk-e-lazzat-e-tūr ho

The mountain is the same. The light is the same. The quality of Divine manifestation remains unchanged and undiminished — it has not retreated, has not dimmed, has not moved to a more distant or more exclusive site. What is missing is not the presence of the Divine but the capacity to perceive and participate in it. Only one who possesses *chashm-e-baseerat* — the discerning inner eye, the vision that sees through the surface of things to the Divine reality within them — can be a true *shareek*, a participant, one who shares in the ecstasy of Sinai.

The limitation is entirely on the side of the perceiver, not the perceived. The Absolute has not withdrawn; the human eye has not yet opened fully.

Here the Sinai Critique arrives at its clearest diagnosis — not a lament about human frailty but a declaration of human capacity: the faculty it names, *chashm-e-baseerat*, will be the essay's constant companion from here forward — the inner sight without which all the Taab and all the Zarf in the world remain incomplete.

If the light is unchanged and the mountain still stands — if the failure is entirely one of perception and capacity — then the question the tradition must answer is this: whose capacity failed at Sinai? And why? Ghalib, in his second *sh'er*, turns from the weight of vision to the mechanics of the encounter itself — and his answer is architectural, not personal. The failure at the mountain was not a failure of the Divine manifestation, not too much light or light wrongly given. It was a failure of the vessel chosen to receive it. This is the *sh'er* that introduces us to *zarf* — that crucial word meaning capacity, interior volume, the depth of the cup — and it is here that Ghalib's debt to Bedil is most visible:

گرنی تھی ہم پہ برق تجلی نہ طور پر
دیتے ہیں بادہ ظرف قدح خوار دیکھ کر

*girnī thī ham pe barq-e-tajallī na tūr par
dete hain bādā zarf-e-qadah-khvār dekh kar*

Using the central metaphor of the Sufi tavern, Ghalib argues that a wise *Sāqī* — the cup-bearer who pours the wine of spiritual experience — only fills a cup after assessing the *zarf* of the one who holds it out. By this logic, the lightning of Divine manifestation — *Barq-e-Tajalli*, the flash of the Absolute making itself known — was poured into the wrong vessel; one incapable of containing it, let alone enduring it. Mount Sinai crumbled. Moses fainted. They proved themselves shallow cups. The *lan tarāni* was not, in Ghalib's reading, a cosmic prohibition or a Divine withholding — it was a *Sāqī*'s practical assessment of an unprepared drinker: *you are not yet ready for what you are asking*. The true lover — the one whose heart has been enlarged through suffering, longing, and intellectual fire — is the only one who could have remained standing. This connects to the Sufi concept of *'ishq-e-ḥaqīqī*, the Universal or Divine Love that is the ultimate destination of all

longing, in which the lover's heart is understood to be more expansive than any physical mountain. The human heart possesses an infinite interior capacity to house the Divine precisely because it has been hollowed out by longing. In this frame, *zarf* is not a passive quality you are simply born with — it is the soul's hard-won capacity for containment, deepened through years of love and loss, the cup that grows larger the more it is emptied.

Having established this idea of capacity, Ghalib takes a step that is, even by his standards, audacious. He completely transforms the entire geography of the Sinai encounter changing it from a closed historical event into an open, standing invitation. He deconstructs the idea that what happened on that mountain was a singular, unrepeatable event, sealed forever in prophetic time. He suggests instead that the outcome of a Divine encounter is not predetermined at all. It depends entirely on the spiritual caliber of the person who shows up:

کیا فرض ہے کہ سب کو ملے ایک سا جواب
آؤ نہ ہم بھی سیر کریں کوہ طور کی

kyā farz hai ke sab ko mile ek sā javāb

ā'o na ham bhī sair karen koh-e-tūr kī

The question Ghalib poses is deceptively simple: Is it mandatory — *farz*, a binding obligation — that everyone receives the same answer? Why must every witness faint? Why must every mountain crumble? By saying, *let us also take a stroll to Sinai*, he is not issuing a humble request but a profound provocation. The deliberate casualness of the word *sair* — a leisurely stroll — is Ghalib's signature strike against traditional awe. To him, Sinai is not a site of terror to be approached on trembling knees; it is a site of aesthetic encounter.

The quality of that encounter, he argues, is determined by the *zarf* — the internal volume — of the seeker. In this light, the *lan tarāni* — You shall not see Me — was merely a specific verdict for Moses, not a universal closure for humanity. Ghalib asserts a daring Subjectivity of Truth: The Absolute does not deliver a fixed response to all comers, but reflects the depth of the one who stands before it.

Implicit here is a reclaimed sense of *ghairat-e- 'ishq* — the dignity of love. Ghalib suggests that if the Divine is a Beloved seeking a gaze worthy of its own splendour, to faint is to silence the only observer capable of validating that splendour; true reverence lies in the strength

to remain standing — to offer a gaze as steady as the manifestation itself. The mountain transforms from a place where the human is weighed and found wanting into a place where the human spirit is found worthy of a dialogue. It is the bridge in Urdu poetics from classical mysticism toward a distinctly modern agency: the possibility of a conversation where prophets once found only silence.

This critique of Moses's *ghash* — his fainting, his failure to sustain the vision — is taken up and deepened by poets who add a dimension that Ghalib, for all his philosophical daring, had not quite reached. Ghalib's argument was personal and philosophical — almost leisurely, like his invitation to stroll. What the anonymous poet brings is something closer to alarm: the sudden recognition that witnessing is not merely a personal achievement but a collective duty. If the one appointed to see falls senseless, beauty itself is left unwitnessed, unrealized, incomplete. It was this *sh'er* — arriving to me without a name attached — that first opened this entire inquiry, and I have chosen to keep it here on its own terms. Some verses arrive without papers. They are no less true for that:

ہمیں بھی جلوہ گاہِ ناز تک لے کے چلو موسیٰ
تمہیں غش آ گیا تو حسنِ جاناں کون دیکھے گا

hamen bhī jalva-gāh-e-nāz tak le ke chalo mūsā
tumhen ghash ā gayā to husn-e-jānān kaun dekhegā

The argument is both practical and profound. Take us — the common lovers, humanity at large — along to the site of manifestation. If the primary witness loses consciousness, the beauty of the Beloved remains unobserved, and in a philosophical sense, unvalidated. Beauty requires a conscious observer to be realized. For that knowing to occur, the witness must remain awake — and not merely awake in the ordinary sense, but possessed of *baseerat*: the inner sight, the spiritual perception that sees through the surface of things to the Divine reality within them, as Amir Minai says, the Divine is omnipresent — if you desire to see, develop the vision:

کون سی جا ہے جہاں جلوہ معشوق نہیں
شوق دیدار اگر ہے تو نظر پیدا کر

kaun sī jā hai jahān jalva-e-māshūq nahīn

shauq-e-dīdār agar hai to nazar paidā kar

Baseerat is not the sight of the eye but the sight of the heart — the faculty that transforms a witness from someone who merely looks into someone who truly sees. This idea resonates with the concept of *sakshi* — the witness — in *Advaita Vedanta*: the principle that consciousness is not incidental to reality but constitutive of it, that the universe is not merely perceived by awareness but in some fundamental sense completed by it. In Sufi poetics these maps onto the figure of the *shāhid* — literally, the one who witnesses — whose seeing completes the manifestation of the Beautiful. If the prophet falls, the homecoming of light and rhythm is interrupted, left unfinished, unreceived. The anonymous poet’s argument is that the task of witnessing is too great and too sacred to be entrusted to a single solitary figure, however exalted; it requires a collective, resilient gaze, possessed of *baseerat* — one that can endure and truly perceive where prophets might falter.

It was precisely this unanswered question — left hanging over Moses, over the smouldering mountain, over the ancient gap between *arinī* and *lan tarāni* — that Aneesa Haroon Shirwaniya seems, across the distance of time, to answer. Moving into the twentieth century, the tone of the Sinai Critique shifts decisively — from philosophical inquiry to radical self-assertion. The question is no longer whether a human can endure the light, but whether a particular human, speaking in the first person with the full authority of a lover, chooses to declare herself its equal. Shirwaniya takes the motif and turns it into a manifesto of human capability.

موسیٰ نہیں کہ تاب نہ لاؤں میں حسن کی
بے پردہ سامنے مرے تو بھی تو آ کے دیکھ

mūsā nahīn ke tāb na lā'ūn main husn kī
be-parda sāmne mire tū bhī to ā ke dekh

By stating “I am not Moses”, Shirwaniya explicitly rejects the prophetic archetype as a model for the seeker. She approaches not as a supplicant trembling before the Divine, not as a prophet requesting permission, but as a lover on her own terms — with the full authority of *Ishq* — of love that has earned its own right of demand.

In the Sufi tradition, *‘ishq-e-majāzī* — earthly love — is the rigorous training ground for *‘ishq-e-ḥaqīqī*, Divine Love. The lover who has endured the agonies of human separation has already tempered

their spirit and begun the journey toward the Absolute.

It is from this position of love's sovereign authority that Shirwaniya claims a superior *tāb* — a resilience, a glow-strength, that Moses for all his prophetic stature never possessed — and turns the challenge back upon the Beloved: drop the veil entirely and stand before me unveiled. *Come and see for yourself, if I am made of the same fragile clay as those who came before.* To the anonymous poet's question — *if you faint, who will witness the beauty of the Beloved?* — Shirwaniya offers the only possible answer: *I will. I am not Moses. I will not fall.*

This sentiment is echoed with even sharper defiance by Behzad Lucknavi, who transforms the encounter into a direct confrontation (*muqābil*) — refusing the comparison with Moses:

اے برق تجلی کوندھ ذرا کیا مجھ کو بھی موسیٰ سمجھا ہے
میں طور نہیں جو جل جاؤں جو چاہے مقابل آ جائے

ai barq-e-tajallī kaundh zarā kyā mujh ko bhī mūsā samajhā hai
main tūr nahīn jo jal jā'ūn jo chāhe muqābil ā jāye

O lightning of manifestation, flash for a moment — do you take me too for a Moses? I am not a Sinai that would burn away — let whatever seeks a confrontation come before me.

Where Shirwaniya refuses to faint, Behzad refuses to burn. The lover who has navigated the agonies of human separation has developed a resilience that Moses never possessed — a *tāb* so tempered by experience that even the *Barq-e-Tajalli* cannot reduce him to ash. The gaze has become not merely an act of endurance but an act of sovereign confrontation. The mountain crumbled because it was stone; the lover will not crumble because he is fire already — shaped by longing into the very element that once destroyed the mountain. He suggests that the Divine Radiance has met its match; the lightning is no longer a punishment to be feared, but a salute to be met. By refusing to blink, Behzad preserves the *ghairat-e- 'ishq* — the dignity of love — suggesting that the real seeker does not merely witness the Light but stands as an equal to it.

And to the anonymous poet's haunting question — *tumhen ghash ā gayā to husn-e-jānān kaun dekhegā* (if you faint, who will witness the Beloved?) — the poets of this tradition finally offer a definitive answer through the voice of Jalal Lucknavi. If Moses fainted once and stopped, *The Wingless Ascent: The Sinai Critique in Urdu Poetry*

the lover of this tradition accepts the faint as part of the rhythm of eternal longing:

سو بار آئے غش ارنی ہی کہوں گا میں
 موسیٰ نہیں کہ پھر ہو نہ دیدار کی ہوس
sau bār āye ghash arinī hī kahūngā main
mūsā nahīn ke phir ho na dīdār kī havas

Even if a faint overcomes me a hundred times, I will still cry *Show Yourself*. I am not Moses — whose desire for the vision vanished after a single strike. This is the persistence of *‘ishq* beyond defeat, the longing that does not diminish in proportion to its suffering but deepens with every fall. Moses fainted once and stopped asking. The lover of this tradition will faint a hundred times and rise each time with the same cry on his lips. The *arinī* is not withdrawn; it is repeated, deepened, made more intimate by every failure. This, the tradition argues, is the true measure of *tāb* — not that one never falls, but that one never stops rising.

The *Sinai* Critique now moves beyond the individual voice toward something larger. Ali Sardar Jafri, in his nazm *sair-e-tūr*, takes the argument from the personal *I* to the collective *we* — and in doing so transforms the entire scale of the human claim:

کہہ دو برق تجلی سے ہو جلوہ گر
 آج موسیٰ نہیں ہم سر طور ہیں
kah do barq-e-tajallī se ho jalva-gar
āj mūsā nahīn ham sar-e-tūr hain

Tell the lightning of manifestation to reveal itself in full glory — today it is not Moses alone who stands on Sinai, but *we*, the collective human consciousness, who stand at its summit. Jafri’s vision is not of a solitary seeker replacing the prophet but of an entire humanity whose Zarf has expanded — through centuries of suffering, longing, and intellectual fire — beyond the capacity of any single prophetic figure. This expansion is precisely what *baseerat* makes possible: not merely the courage to stand at Sinai, but the inner sight to perceive what is already present there, to see through the terror of the lightning to the love that animates it. The human being is no longer overwhelmed by

the light; humanity stands as the mountain itself, ready not merely to witness the *Tajallī* but to receive it in full, with *baseerat* as the faculty that transforms the encounter from catastrophe into recognition.

But the Sinai Critique does not end with defiance, however magnificent. Allama Iqbal carries the argument into a register that is deeper and quieter — not the assertion of superior Taab, but a transformation of longing itself through the discipline of *adab*. He stands in relation to the same spiritual horizon as the prophet but refuses to be a character in someone else's narrated history:

ارنی میں بھی کہہ رہا ہوں مگر
یہ حدیثِ کلیم و طور نہیں
arinī main bhī kah rahā hūn magar
yeh hadīs-e-kalīm-o-tūr nahīn

This couplet does something remarkable. It neither denies the ancient story nor claims its *maqām*. The speaker acknowledges the same impulse — the same irresistible desire to see, to know, to encounter — but refuses to equate his longing with the prophetic experience at Sinai. There is no claim to revelation, no assertion of spiritual grandeur, no competition with Moses. Only a quiet, mature recognition: that every *arinī* is shaped by the one who utters it, that longing does not come in a single prophetic form but in as many forms as there are hearts that feel it. Every heart may carry its own *arinī* — but every *arinī* carries a different tone, a different entitlement, a different *anjām*. It avoids despair, yet resists arrogance; it accepts longing, yet disciplines its expression. And then Iqbal goes further still:

تھا ارنی گو کلیم میں ارنی گو نہیں
اس کو تقاضا روا مجھ پہ تقاضا حرام
thā arinī' go kalīm, main arinī- go nahīn
us ko taqāzā ravā, mujh pe taqāzā harām

Moses — Kaleem, the one to whom God spoke directly, a title that marks his unique spiritual *maqām* — had the rank and spiritual authority to cry *arinī*. That insistence, that *taqāza*, was appropriate for him, fitting to his divinely sanctioned station. But Iqbal refuses it for himself — not out of mere humility or unworthiness, but out of a

heightened *adab*, a disciplined awareness of spiritual proportion and difference of station. The longing remains — intense, even uncompromising, entirely alive — but it refuses to assume the form of a demand that belonged to prophetic *maqām*. This is not the dissolution of the *I* and the *Thou*; Iqbal does not endorse the erasure of *Khudī*, the self, even at the highest spiritual intensity. Rather, he inhabits the distance between lover and Beloved consciously — preserving desire, preserving the creative tension of the relation, while disciplining its outward expression. The deepest intimacy, Iqbal suggests, may lie not in demanding the spectacle of vision but in recognising that true presence has become more inward than any spectacle could reach. This is the station beyond Shirwaniya's defiance and Jafri's collective assertion — not the transcendence of longing, but its transformation into something too intimate, too disciplined, too inwardly assured to require the form of a demand.

Thus, three poetic responses to Moses Sinai stand before us: Shirwaniya refuses to fall; Jafri expands the claim to all humanity; and Iqbal, more inwardly, transforms the very grammar of longing.

The question is no longer whether one can endure the light, nor even who may stand before it, but how desire itself must be shaped in the presence of the Real.

It is at this point — where longing neither asserts nor demands, where it trembles on the edge of speech — that Abdul Hameed Adam enters the tradition. And with him, the movement of the Sinai Critique takes a final, devastating turn: not toward greater strength, nor wider claim, nor even finer restraint — but toward a recognition in which the distance itself begins to dissolve, and the very need for Sinai is quietly undone.

There is a tenderness in Adam's *sh'er* that none of the earlier voices quite prepare us for. He steps away from the human seeker altogether and places the words in the mouth of the Divine — and what the Divine seems to say is this:

کاش میں تری ملاقات کو خود ہی آتا
 طور پر بھیج کے موسیٰ کو پشیمان ہوں میں
kāsh main terī mulāqāt ko khud hī ātā
tūr par bhej ke mūsā ko pashemān hūn main

The *sh'er* imagines the Divine as if in regret at having allowed the encounter to unfold through mediation. The intensity of a true meeting,

Adam suggests, cannot be delegated — it cannot be fully carried by a messenger, nor staged upon a mountain in thunder and lightning. By sending Moses to Sinai as intermediary, something of the immediacy of presence seems to slip away — the directness, the intimacy, the face-to-face that love demands.

In this vision, the grand theater of Sinai quietly recedes. What remains is not the spectacle of manifestation, but the poignancy of a meeting that might have been more intimate still: an I and a Thou that could have stood before one another without distance or formality. The *sh'er* thus inverts the familiar structure of the Sinai narrative. It is no longer a story of human incapacity before overwhelming light, but a poetic imagining of divine longing for unmediated presence.

If the *arinī* of Moses — Show Yourself to me — is answered in the tradition with *lan tarānī*, Adam's couplet transforms that moment into something far more intimate: not refusal, but a wistful nearness — *I wish I had come to you myself*. Where Ghalib could suggest that the gift of vision overwhelms the human capacity to bear it, Adam turns the axis of the encounter altogether, imagining a meeting that required neither mountain nor lightning, neither spectacle nor intermediary — only presence.

Across these readings, the Sinai moment is progressively reinterpreted: from the prophetic encounter of Moses to later poetic engagements that resist, expand, and refine its terms. What emerges is not a linear progression but a series of recalibrations of longing — its legitimacy, its scope, and its mode of expression. Where earlier voices test the limits of endurance or extend the claim to a collective human consciousness, Iqbal, more quietly, redirects attention to the discipline of desire itself, while Adam brings that movement to its most intimate inversion — placing the words of longing in the mouth of the Divine.

Yet this inward turn does not conclude the Sinai Critique. It prepares the ground for a further transformation — one in which the site of manifestation itself is reimagined, and the terms of encounter are no longer defined by mountain or mediation, but by the human capacity to receive.

It is at this juncture that Allama Iqbal returns with a couplet that carries the Sinai Critique to one of its most luminous formulations. Where Adam's *sh'er* reveals the Divine regretting the distance introduced by mediation, Iqbal goes further — reconfiguring not only the mode of encounter but its very locus. The mountain recedes; the lightning of manifestation is no longer externalised; the site of

encounter shifts inward, to the human self:

کبھی اے حقیقت منتظر نظر آ لباس مجاز میں
 کہ ہزاروں سجدے تڑپ رہے ہیں مری جبین نیاز میں
kabhī ai haqīqat-e-muntazar nazar ā libās-e-majāz men
ke hazāron sajde tarāp rahe hain merī jabīn-e-niyāz men

O long-awaited Reality — appear, for once, in the garment of the visible, in a form accessible to human perception; for thousands of prostrations tremble with longing in the forehead of my supplication.

The prayer requires careful reading. At Sinai, the Divine *dīd* appear in *libās-e-majāz* — the lightning, the burning mountain, the overwhelming light were all forms of material manifestation. But that *zuhur* — the Divine manifestation — exceeded human endurance; it appeared in the material world yet in a form that annihilated the witness. Moses fainted not because God withheld himself from the material realm, but because the form of His appearing still surpassed human *zarf*. Iqbal's longing is therefore not simply for Divine appearance in the visible world — it is for a different kind of *zuhur*, a different mode of manifestation — one that enters the realm of the perceptible, the livable, the humanly receivable; one that comes clothed in a visibility the human self can sustain and recognise without being destroyed by it.

In this sense, Iqbal does not abolish Sinai so much as relocate and refine it. The mountain is no longer a place one travels to; it becomes a state one inhabits. The lightning of manifestation is no longer something that descends from without in overwhelming force; it is what the awakened self, charged with *baseerat* and deepened by longing, has become capable of receiving within. The trembling prostrations are not merely acts of devotion; they are the very condition of receptivity — the interior ground upon which a sustainable, livable manifestation may occur. Iqbal reframes the question entirely: not where the Divine appears, but how — and in what form — the human becomes capable of receiving it. The human *jabīn-e-niyāz* — the forehead of longing bent in prayer — holds more charged devotion than the mountain ever drew from the sky. And unlike the mountain, it does not crumble. It was made for this.

The *maqdūr* of the Spirit is not found in fainting before the light; it

is found in a forehead so alive with *baseerat* that it becomes the true Sinai — the site where manifestation happens from within.

To understand the full scope of the Sinai Critique, we must move beyond the act of witnessing toward the act of becoming — toward the question that underlies everything the tradition has been building toward: not whether the human can sustain the sight of the Absolute, but whether the human spirit possesses the inherent authority to transcend the very boundaries that bind even the celestial, to reach without wings where angels cannot follow.

It is Khwaja Mir Dard — himself a Sufi master as much as he was a poet, a man whose verse spoke from lived spiritual practice rather than philosophical speculation, and the defining voice of what we may call the Delhi School of the Sinai Critique — who first tells us why Moses fainted, and then shows us where the human arrives when the reason for fainting has been dissolved. For Dard, the Sinai event was not a Divine refusal and not a human failure of courage; it was something more precise and more correctable — a *parda-e-du'ī*, a veil of duality. Moses fainted because he still stood as an I before a *Thou*, a self still separate from the light it sought. It was this residual duality — the perception of the seer as distinct from the seen — that invited the lightning bolt. The rupture was not between the human and the Divine; it was within the human's own perception. And the correction, Dard tells us, is not greater courage but greater dissolution — *fanā*, the annihilation of the separate self, from which alone true *tāb* is born. For when the self ceases to stand apart from the Light — when the I that once trembled before the Thou recognises them as one — there is no longer anything to be overwhelmed. The very act of dissolution becomes the source of endurance:

What could not survive as a separate self — fragile, bounded, and trembling before the light — survives as an undivided presence. The vessel overwhelmed by the lightning does not end; in its emptying, it becomes the only space vast enough to hold the light. Through this annihilation of the limited I, the human shifts from a fragile thing struggling against the Absolute to the very space in which the Absolute rests. This is the ultimate endurance: a strength that never tires because it has no boundaries to break.

The faint yields to perpetual *dīdār* — the unbroken, continuous vision that Khusrāu described as *muttasīl*. In a sher attributed to Dard, *The Wingless Ascent: The Sinai Critique in Urdu Poetry*

this inversion of the Sinai geography is stated with complete finality:

دل میں طور ہے نہ طور میں دل
جلوۂ رب در دل نہ دل در طور
dil men tūr hai, na tūr men dil
jalva-e-rab dar-e-dil, na dil dar-e-tūr

Sinai is in the heart — the heart is not in Sinai. The glory of the Lord stands at the door of the heart — the heart does not stand at the door of Sinai. Dard inverts the entire geography of the encounter: *Ishq* relocates the *Tajallī* to the *maqām-e-qalb* — the station of the heart — dissolving the prophet's swoon into a perpetual gaze. Moses traveled to the mountain and fell. But the one who has understood Dard's inversion does not need to travel anywhere. The mountain is already within. The Divine is already at the threshold. The *lan tarānī* was spoken to a man who was looking outward for what lived within him all along. With the duality dissolved, with the *I* and the *Thou* recognised as one essence, the heart becomes the true Sinai — not a place of catastrophic encounter but the permanent, living site of *Tajallī*.

It is from this station of dissolved duality, of perfected *zarf* and awakened *baseerat*, that Dard's second and culminating *sh'er* speaks — the one that closes this entire arc with the full authority of witnessed truth:

باوجودیکہ پر و بال نہ تھے آدم کے
وہاں پہنچاکہ فرشتے کا بھی مقدر نہ تھا
bā-vujūde ke par-o-bāl na the ādam ke
vahān pahunchā ki farishte kā bhī maqdūr na thā

Adam — the human being, archetypal and particular — is wingless. He possesses no celestial apparatus, no angelic nature, no instrument of pure light. And yet he reached a station of proximity to the Divine that was beyond the *maqdūr* — the sovereign reach, the authorized capacity, the outermost limit of what one is destined to attain — surpassing even the most exalted angels. This ascent was possible because the human had done what Bedil prescribed and Moses could not: he dissolved the duality. Moses fainted because he still stood as an *I* before a *Thou* — a self still separate from the light it sought, still trapped in what Bedil called the *bastagi-e-zarf*, the constriction of a

vessel that had not yet opened fully. The lightning struck because there was still a gap between the seeker and the sought — and in that gap, the current surged and overwhelmed. But Adam, refined through the long fire of love and the slow dissolution of the self, arrived at the station where the *I* and the *Thou* were no longer two things. His *baseerat* had grown so vast, his *zarf* so deep and open, that the distance between the human and the Divine simply ceased to exist. There was no longer a seer and a seen — only seeing itself, luminous, unified, at rest.

The word *maqdūr* deserves a moment's attention. It means not mere ability or capacity in a mechanical sense; it carries within it a suggestion of destiny — of what one is not just capable of, but authorized and appointed to reach. For Dard, writing as a Sufi master, the human ascent to *lā-makān* — the Station of No-Station, the place beyond all place, where the categories of 'here' and 'there' dissolve — isn't a rebellion against the cosmic order, but it's fulfillment. It is the *tuhfa-e-khilāfat* — a phrase that carries the weight of an entire theology within it. *Khilāfat* means vicegerency. In the Quranic tradition, when God declares *I am placing a khalifa on earth*, the human being is appointed not merely as a creature among creatures but as God's conscious representative and trustee of all creation — the one in whom the Divine trust is placed, the one through whom creation finds its meaning. *Tuhfa* means gift. So *tuhfa-e-khilāfat* is the gift of being appointed God's vicegerent on earth. It's the dignity that places the human being right at the center of the universe, acting as its steward and its witness. This is what the human was made for. Not to tremble at Sinai. Not to collapse and faint before the lightning. We were made to arrive — in full consciousness, with full authority of love, carrying *baseerat* as our inner lamp — at the very station where even angels cannot follow.

Moses cried out *arini* (show me) and was met with *lan tarāni* (you shall not see me). But look at Adam. He was wingless, shaped from mere dust and clay - the most fragile, earthly thing in existence. Yet he was refined through the slow, long fire of longing until he became something the heavens could not match. He simply arrived. He didn't ask. He wasn't refused. He had dissolved the very duality that knocked Moses off his feet. He had expanded the *zarf* - the vessel of capacity that Bedil identified as the real obstacle. He built *baseerat* so perfectly clear and a Taab so fierce that the distance between the human and the Divine simply ceased to exist.

And yet, even arrival is not the final word. If Dard shows us the

human reaching where angels could not follow, Mir Ali Ausat Rashk shows us what that arrival actually feels like from the inside — and it is not a vision, not a triumph, not even a meeting. It is silence:

اب تو باتیں بھی ہو گئیں موقوف
 ارنی ہے نہ لن ترانی ہے
ab to bāten bhī ho ga'in mauqūf
arinī hai na lan-tarānī hai

Even conversation has ceased. The ancient dialogue of Sinai — Moses's desperate *arinī* and the Divine's absolute *lan tarānī* — has simply dissolved into stillness. This did not happen because an argument was won, nor because a demand was suddenly granted or a refusal taken back. Rather, at the station of true union, the very vocabulary of asking and refusing becomes unnecessary. The words existed only to bridge the distance between the seeker's cry and the Beloved's refusal. As that distance dissolves, so too do the words — *arinī* and *lan tarānī* vanish into the silence of union.

The mountain is gone. The thunder is gone. The lightning that once split the rock and stole the prophet's senses has absolutely nothing left to strike. There is no longer a need to ask for a vision because the vision is no longer external, no longer something arriving from outside. There is no longer a refusal because the distance across which a refusal could travel has ceased to exist. *Baseerat* has done its full work: This inner sight has dissolved the illusion that Bedil called *tilism* — confirming what Khusrāu knew all along: the *Tūr* was always within the *dar*, the mountain was always the heart, and the *Tajalli* was always already present, simply waiting for an eye that could truly see it. This is the highest station of *zarf* — a silence so complete, so luminous, and so completely devoid of drama that it doesn't require a bolt of lightning to validate it. The *arinī* has been answered not by being granted but by becoming unnecessary. The *lan tarānī* has been dissolved not by being defied but by being outgrown. What remains is only presence — the quiet, absolute, wordless presence of the soul that has finally come home.

The Sinai Critique in Urdu poetry is not an act of theological rebellion. It is an act of supreme, hard-won confidence in the human soul — a confidence earned not through arrogance but through the fire

of longing, the refinement of *zarf*, the cultivation of *tāb*, and the deepening of *baseerat* across centuries of this poetic tradition.

We have traced a narrative arc that begins with Khusrau moving the mountain into the heart, deepens with Bedil revealing the mountain as the illusion of a constricted vessel, opens with Mohammad Baqar Shams's reproach to the Divine — *all this fury for one small question from one who loved You?* - passes through Moses's innocent unknowing and Qamar Jalalvi's portrait of the lover undone by sincerity, through Rana Aamir Liaquat's haunting question of whether that journey to Sinai was the end of longing or only its beginning - arrives at Jigar's diagnosis — the light never changed, the mountain never changed, it was only the eye that hadn't yet opened - then at Ghalib's philosophical doubt — the eyelash too fragile to bear the gift of vision, Ghalib's argument rooted in Bedil's metaphysical blueprint — passes through his open invitation to stroll upon the mountain and his assertion of *ghairat-e-'ishq*, gathers force in an anonymous poet's devastating question about who will witness if the prophet falls, finds its answer in Shirwaniya's defiance - the lover approaching the Divine on her own terms, armed with the authority of *'ishq*, - sharpens in Behzad Lucknavi's sovereign refusal to burn, deepens in Jalal Lucknavi's stubborn insistence that even a hundred faints will not silence the *arinī*, expands in Jafri's collective humanity standing at Sinai's summit — armed now with *baseerat* finds its most intimate personal expression in Iqbal's transformation of longing through *adab* and his command for the long-awaited Reality to appear in a *zuhūr* the human self can sustain, reaches its most tender inversion in Adam's *Tūr* where the Divine itself mourns the missed meeting, ascends through Dard's first *sh'er* — the heart containing Sinai, the Divine standing at the heart's threshold — to his second certitude that the wingless human, having dissolved the duality and perfected the *baseerat* and carrying within him the *tuhfa-e-khilāfat*, reached where angels could not follow, and arrives finally at Rashk's silence — where even the words *arinī* and *lan tarānī* have dissolved, and only presence remains.

And in this dissolution, the essay's deepest insight finally surfaces - the insight that Khusrau knew at the very beginning of this lineage: the external Sinai — that famous mountain of thunder and lightning — was never the true site of encounter. It was merely the shadow of an internal geography. The true *Tūr* is wherever the heart opens; the true *Tajallī* is whenever the eye shifts from unseeing to witnessing — when

baseerat awakens and the inner sight perceives what the outer eye could never reach. The extraordinary was never confined to a distant desert peak; the ordinary was always its truest dwelling.

It is precisely this knowledge — hard-won, carried across centuries of longing, rising, and refusal — that vindicates the human heart as the only place in existence where Beauty can truly find its home, because it is the only place capable of holding both the light and the longing for it. This is the final transition: from the seeker who is merely *maqbūl* — accepted by grace — to the soul that is *maqdūr* — sovereign by nature. The human spirit, having endured the faint, the rupture, the reproach, the doubt, and the long grief of separation, now stands as a resilient witness bearing the scars of the Sinai struggle as medals of the inner journey.

The backward glance at Sinai is not a look of regret or defeat. It is a quiet validation of human strength. The mountain may shudder and the prophet may fall, but the poet remains standing — eyes wide open, bearing the hundred manifestations with a grace that even the heavens might envy. We are no longer waiting for the lightning; we have become the light.

This is the *maqdūr* of the Spirit: not merely that man saw the light, but that he surpassed the very boundaries of its manifestation — and in doing so, revealed what the tradition had always quietly known: that the Divine and the human were never truly separate. What *arinī* truly seeks is not a visual spectacle but a transformation of the seer — the awakening of *baseerat*, the inner sight that dissolves the illusion of the mountain and recognises the Beloved already present within the *dar* of the heart. The *I want to see You* of the prophet has become the *See me as You are* of the poet — echoing the ancient insight of one of Persia's greatest Sufi mystics, Attar, in *The Conference of the Birds*, where the thirty birds, after traversing the seven valleys of seeking, discover that the Simurgh they pursued was always mirrored in themselves. The one who seeks the Light is the one in whom the Light finds its truest reflection.

Prophet: *Bring me to You.*

Poet: *See Yourself in me; let my heart be Your mirror.*

Moses asked to see the Absolute; the poets now ask the Absolute to see the human heart, and to recognise there the same fire that scorched the mountain. There was only longing — waiting for union with its beloved. And so, the circle completes, transfigured. The word that opened the journey returns at its close — not as a plea, not as a

demand, not as a desperate cry from the foot of a burning mountain — but as a gesture of recognition, a quiet greeting between two who were never separate.

Arinī!



Ammara: A Sign of What is to Come

While this journey concludes with *arinī* as a quiet gesture of recognition, a further thought lingers in the silence of Rashk. The final *sh'er* of this study —

اب تو باتیں بھی ہو گئیں موقوف
ارنی ہے نہ لن ترانی ہے
ab to bāten bhī ho ga 'īn mauqūf
arinī hai na lan-tarānī hai

Now even the discourse has ceased; there is neither *arinī* nor *lan tarānī*. — this erasure of dialogue is not a neutral dissolution, but a fulfilled affirmation: the “Yes” (*Sa-tarānī*) that was always latent in the “No”.

Part 1 has traced the journey to Sinai and the human standing there, sovereign and wingless. If *arinī* was the plea of the desperate, then the forthcoming movement of this work — Part 2 to follow — will explore *absirnī*: the shift from asking for a Revelation to asking for the Capacity to see. It begins with the radical discovery that at the height of the encounter, the *I* was never truly there:

طور پر چھیڑا تھا جس نے آپ کو
وہ مری دیوانگی تھی میں نے تھا
tūr par chheṛā thā jis ne āp ko
wuh merī dīvānagī thī main na thā

(It was my madness that provoked You on Sinai; it was not I)

In the pages to come, we shall see how the geography of the mountain finally gives way to the geography of *baseerat*, where the promise of vision is no longer a distant event, but a present transformation.

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