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Politics of Representation: Verse, Visual and Interpretation of Allama Iqbal in the Works of Chughtai and Sadequain

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Abstract

Within International Relations and political science studies the relationship between visual representation and political meaning have become increasingly significant in contemporary times. Recent scholarship on visual international relations also highlight the importance of objects being an active participant in the production of identities and understanding of the societal world (Williams 2018). Dr. Allama Muhammed Iqbal is a celebrated personality among modern South Asian literary circles. Likewise, Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Syed Sadequain Naqvi occupy significant positions in Pakistani visual art Scene. Both artists in their artistic journey at one point in time got inspired by Iqbal's philosophical and political ideas resulting in a fascinatingly new body of works. There is a wealth of scholarship on both the painters in relation to the poet however there is a dearth of analysis in the context of visual politics and role of aesthetics in International Relations. Approaching those works as agents of cultural and intellectual representation the current study brings art-historical analysis into dialogue with the said field. Another practical implication of the current study is the three tier framework that is devised to analyse the visuals in relation to their corresponding verses. The paper argues that the interaction between verse and visual creates an extended field of meaning in which the verse informs the visual while the visual offers new possibilities of confronting and comprehension of the verse.

Key Words: Visual Politics, Sociopolitical Art, Iqbal, Chughtai, Sadequain, Visual Interpretation.

Poet and the Painters: Introduction

'شاعر مشرق' **Poet of the East**, Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal is a celebrated personality of the Indian subcontinent with fame spread east and west too. A thinker, a poet, a philosopher, and a firm supporter of Muslim political rights, Iqbal with his matchless imagination and rare imagery blew a new spirit to the Urdu language. After *Ghalib*, we know from history that it is *Iqbal* is the one who glorified the Urdu language. The eloquence and elegance *Iqbal* has induced into this language has spread the fame of Urdu to Iran, Aisa Minor, and even to Europe (Abd Al-Qadir n.d.). Some scholars have referred to Iqbal as an artist in verse. This may again be attributed to

his interest in the use of sharp imagery (D. M. Iqbal n.d.) However, Iqbal's poetry is not a mere combination of words arranged in an order. His verses are enriched with visual metaphors and verbal imagery and are a source of 'حرکت و حرارت' (motivation, drive, and enthusiasm) for its reader. Hence Iqbal's inherent visual potential extends beyond the written text and offers fertile ground for artistic interpretation.

There is an immense commentary that has been made on the form that exists in Iqbal's poetry. He looked down upon the 'sweet expression' and favoured the idea of elevating thought through the verse. Besides the verbal imagery, the divine rhythm, harmony, and voice of his verses have inspired a couple of visual artists to create pieces that still exist and relish the eye and soul of the onlooker just as they did when they were first created. *Abdur Rehman Chughtai* and *Syed Sadequain Naqvi* are two such well celebrated Pakistani visual artists.

Being modernists and innovators of their times, *Chughtai* and *Sadequain* created works that were complicated conceptually and abstract visually resulting in exciting responses from the viewer.

"Born in the last decade of the 19th century, *Chughtai* is an esteemed South Asian artist who established a new trend with his practice. His birthplace is Lahore which was considered a culturally booming center since Mughal reign."... "*Chughtai* in his nascent years discovered the companies of important men of pen like *Rabindranath Tagore*, *Ustaad Sher Muhammad*, *Ustaad Husain Buksh* and later was given the privilege of a long companionship with Allama Mohammad Iqbal who strengthened his art and brightened his soul" (Cheema 2019).

Today *Chughtai's* name is also synonymous with *Iqbal* for his exquisite collaboration titled *Amal e Chughtai* (fig: 1& 2) he did with him. In his piece of writing '*Mera Funn Aur Shaer e Mashriq*' *Chughtai* attributed most of his understanding about art and sensitivity towards humanity to *Iqbal sahib's* camaraderie" (Cheema 2019).

The second painter in consideration is a critically acclaimed artist and **poet Sadequain** is a mystic artist from Pakistan. He is among such few people who not only were a star of their times but will also be remembered through centuries. With an unparalleled and unsurpassed contribution to the field of arts with his gigantic murals, intriguing paintings, innovative calligraphies, exquisite drawings, and introspective quatrains he became the legend of his age. A recipient of *Pride of Performance*, *Tamgha-e-Imtiaz*, *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* he also won international awards like the Australian Cultural Award, and Gold Mercury Award, and Laureate Biennale de Paris (About Sadequain n.d.). Like *Chughtai*, he maintained a deep engagement with literature and regarded poetry as an essential source of artistic inspiration (Sirhindi 1992).

Visual representations can not be dismissed as less significant only because they are created and exist generally outside the traditional political institution. Scholarly works on international relationing are increasingly recognizing the power of visuality and aesthetics as significant dimensions of political realm. Williams argues that images and aesthetics have an important place in international theory and

political life. Callahan similarly treats visually as a way of examining the relationship between images, ideology, affect, and political meaning (Williams 2018). Thus visuals carry potential that have been found challenging the traditional textual approaches in the politics. Visuals works therefore shall also be examined as ways to organise seeing, feeling and understanding socio political world (Joanathan Luke Austin 2014).

Although considerable scholarship exists on Iqbal's poetry and independent studies (Sirhindi 1992) & (Dadi, *Art in Pakistan: The First Decades* 2009) have examined the artistic achievements of Chughtai and Sadequain, comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how these artists had interpreted the same poetic source through different visual languages. Existing discussions for example (Khan 2022) often primarily describe these works as illustrations of Iqbal's poetry, whereas their artistic significance extends beyond that. Few scholars such as (Aqib 2022) have argued that the poetry inspired works by painters establish a correspondence between literary and visual media.

This study therefore extends to examine how the relationship between text and image functions in the selected works of Chughtai and Sadequain and how each artistic negotiations make the transition happen from poetic language to visual expression ultimately contributing to broader understanding of Iqbal's political and philosophical ideas.

Methodology: A Three Tier Model

This study has adopted a qualitative comparative approach to examine the visual interpretative approach of the painters. So the selected artworks which are directly associated with Iqbal's poetry are analysed. Furthermore close visual analysis in conjunction with textual interpretation is employed. To ensure consistency throughout the comparative discussion the study develops a three-tier analytical framework. Same interpretative criteria is used to examine both artists. This framework is helpful to move the comparison beyond stylistic description ultimately guiding the reader to understand how visual art functions as a medium of political and philosophical reception.

Formal analysis will be done at the first level. Focusing on composition, line, colour, symbolism, treatment of space, representation of the human figure, materials, technique, overall visual organisations will be examined. This would help establishing the artist's individual visual language and demonstrate how artistic decisions can contribute to the interpretation of poetic ideas.

The second level investigates the image text relationship. Considering the artworks as literal illustrations, this level instead analyses the ways in which poetry and image interact. Differing strategies in negotiation of the relationship between verbal and visual expression adopted by both painters have given particular attention.

Moving beyond formal analysis and image text relationships, the third level constitutes the principal analytical contribution of this study as it examines how each artist receives and reinterprets the poet's ideas through visual language.

The approach corresponds with recent developments in visual International Relations scholars are increasingly attentive to the formal characteristics, discursive meanings, and social contexts of those artefacts. The present study therefore combines close visual observation with textual and contextual analysis instead of treating the artwork as transparent evidence of a predetermined political meaning.

Historical Context: Poet, Painters and the Reception of Verses

The poet and the painters occupy a distinct status in modern Pakistani cultural history as well as their intellectual and artistic relation too. Although belonging to different generations and artistic disciplines, all three figures contributed significantly to shaping twentieth-century Muslim intellectual and artistic thought. Their engagement with literature, philosophy, and visual expression all provides an important context to understand the translation of poetic ideas into visual form.

In Chughai's case this relationship culminated in the creation of *Amal e Chughtai* fig: 1 Developed over several decades the publication remains an important landmark in the history of Pakistani art as well as South Asia in terms of collaboration between a poet and a painter and of rare artistic merit (Majeed 1987). Similarly, Sadequain's paintings, murals, and calligraphic interpretations of Iqbal's verses reveal another mode of artistic engagement in which poetic thought is transformed through expressive line, monumental composition, and symbolic imagery.

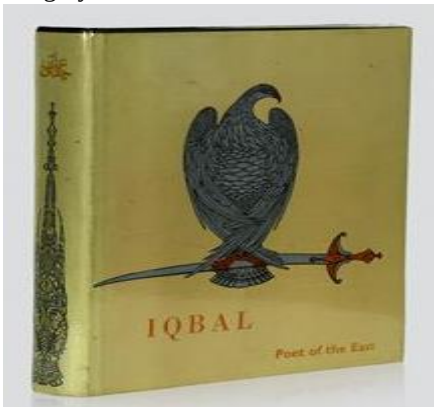


Figure 1: *Amal e Chughtai*

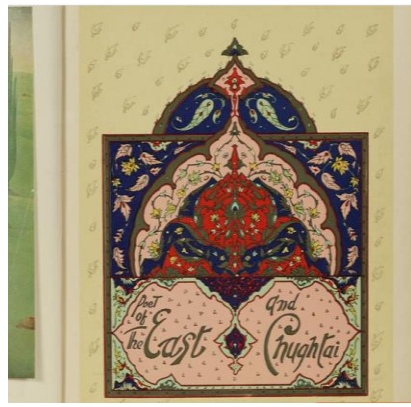


Figure 2: A Folio of *Amal e Chughtai*

In visual arts miniature is a tradition that was already existing where a story is being told or the words are given forms with the help of colors, lines, shapes, and textures. So the phenomenon of illustration wasn't new when the painters decided to bring the verses into the visual realm. However the most interesting thing to inquire about could be that what made them decide this. This inquiry could lead to extending the understanding of not only the verses but the painter's visual world too. S. A Rehman points towards the root by saying that Iqbal being an 'ideological inspirer' and the torchbearer of the 'Muslim renaissance' in that part of the world is the reason to inspire particularly in *Chughtai's* case who devoted himself to create a reverential tribute (Rehman 1968).

Another reason for the verses receiving visual translation could be that the painters probably have shared similar traits of which the poet has made mention of in his verses when he talks about ideas of beauty, *Janoon*, *Mujahid*, or *Mard e Momin*. To

Iqbal besides selfhood, intuition was a higher authority than logic or reason when it comes to creativity (Dadi 2011). We know from historical accounts that both painters throughout their lifetime were fearless, nonconforming, and half-mad for the process of discovering themselves. Their eccentric streaks stemmed out of the passion to create and to unravel the notions of time which they accomplished.

Iqbal's inspiring poetic and philosophical concepts of selfhood and integrity strongly resonated with Sadequain well before he decided to visualize them as integrity and uprightness remained a major theme of the painter's practice. His works prior to his collaboration with the poet have reflected various states of self-realization and consciousness. Hence there existed a similarity in the themes of intellectual query of both the painter and the poet. If Sadequain already shared with *Iqbal* the themes of intellectual inquiry through his art, *Chughtai* acquired it with time. The company of *Iqbal* left a deep influence on *Chughtai*. He did get interested in the analogy of desert and its symbolic significance to express his ideas about love, loss, passion, and sacrifice. The music that the poet created through his unravelling orchestration of words is carried along and being elaborated in the painter's visuals. In *The Desert in Love*, Fig: 3 the artist makes the viewer stand next to him to watch the sand settling in the desert after the caravan of *Laila* has stopped to meet his *Majnu*. A herd of deer being empathetic to the situation has also put themselves into rest to wait until the meeting is over. Making the fullest use of visual metaphors artists employ their skills to the service of the human mind.

These points along with examples are discussed in detail in the later half of the study.

Word & Image and Framework for Visual Interpretation of the Verses

Poetry and painting use systems of almost similar systems of representations. They both seek communication and to transmit emotions communicate ideas, emotions, and experiences. Though they both use different tools yet they both possess the ability to ignite imagination and transcend meanings that often go beyond literal translation. This relationship of word and visual could be a reason of both being discussed together as enduring subjects in the historical discourses dealing with aesthetics and literary critique.

Classical writers for example Simonides is among the earliest to recognize this affinity. He is known for his debate where he describes painting as silent poetry and poetry as speaking painting. Besides Simonides this correspondence between the two expressions is further reinforced by Horace's famous phrase *ut pictura poesis* arts (Arnulf 2017). Such discourses acknowledged their shared capacity of the two forms that help represent human experience. Later on these analogies have encouraged scholars to draw parallels and comparison between the verbal and the visual (Aqib 2022). The parallels between the two forms however have created significant critical debate. During 18th century, in an essay *Laocoon*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing challenged the idea of sister arts (McCormick 1984). Since each form has a different mode of reception Lessing argued that both poetry and painting being based on different principles function differently. If a visual exists in space and uses visual and spatial relationships to communicate the verse on the other hand unfolds through time and transcends itself in succession. Interestingly enough Chughtai in his first edition introduction expresses this concept according to a

painter's point of view. He states that the verse is written once but read million times. During the process of regeneration (printing) its form doesn't change. However the creation of visual is a different process. Even during the process of creation is changes and unfolds differently when regenerated. The original visual also changes its appearance as time passes (Chughtai 1968). Lessing's preposition that verses can not be translated into visuals until they undergo into some transformation is a significant distinction to this study. If we take his argument then visualizing verses involves interpretation than direct equivalence.

Taking inspiration from the same literary source, the painters have reconstructed the poetic meaning. They do this according to their own visual syntax, and aesthetic preferences. This results in visuals that exist as artistic statements that are autonomous. At the same time the visuals maintain an intellectual dialogue with the original text rather than just being literal visual translation or illustrations.

It would be helpful to unpack the term illustration before moving further. The term *illustration* has traditionally referred to the visual explanation or clarification of a written text (Scallert 2017). Within artistic practice, however, illustration encompasses a much broader spectrum of creative possibilities. Artistic illustration frequently extends, reinterprets, or even challenges the meanings embedded within the source text. Consequently, the relationship between text and image is understood as dialogic than hierarchical. None of the medium exists simply to serve the other, instead both contribute to the construction of meaning through their respective expressive capacities.

The present study therefore approaches the selected works of Chughtai and Sadequain through the concept of visual interpretation than illustration alone. As visual interpretation acknowledges the autonomy of the artwork. It also recognize its intellectual relationship with the literary source. It allows the analysis to move beyond questions of fidelity to the text furthermore examines how imagery, composition, symbolism, line, colour, and calligraphy extend poetic ideas within the visual domain. This is one reason visuals have received popularity in the international relation domain.

Visual Reception of Iqbal in Chughtai's Works

As discussed earlier Amal-e-Chughtai is an intimate alliance that has happened between the poet of the east and the painter of the east. It occupies unique status in modern South Asian book culture material history representing the most comprehensive visual expressions of Iqbal's poetry.



Figure 1: *The Leadership* امامتِ جہاں

Chughtai's interpretive approach can be unpacked in the above work titled *The Leadership* (Fig. 1). The accompanying verse is

سبق پھر پڑھ صداقت کا، عدالت کا، شجاعت کا
لیا جائے گا تجھ سے کام دنیا کی امامت کا

(A. Iqbal, Paighaam 1924)

The painter does not take the words *sabaq*, *Adalat*, *Shujaat* and *imammat* literally. Instead he uses visual metaphors of a young man, child, scroll, book, an embracing gesture, flock of eagles above the two figures. A child sits in the lap of a man whose arms are almost wrapped around the child's body and his hand movement makes a composite gesture of protection, encouragement and guidance for the young to read and focus on the book the child is holding in his hand. The man while safeguarding a child also keeps his eye around where a flock of eagles is sitting as if they are waiting for his instructions. The eyes of a young man's eyes reflect confidence assuring guidance to those whose eyes are closed (child's eyes) or are yet to be uncovered (eagle's eyes). The philosophical essence of the verse is condensed into a carefully orchestrated visual arrangement. Chughtai responds by constructing the narrative centred on the relationship between experience and learning. Over political authority, the painter preferred knowledge, moral responsibility and spiritual guidance to express leadership.

Via thoughtful selection of metaphors like gestures of humans vs birds, the use of color red the painter evokes the ideals of awakening of intellectual and spiritual nature that are employed by the poet in the verses. As independent symbols the visual vocabulary is expanding the intellectual possibilities of the poem. This represents that the system of visual interpretation functions on its own way and shall not be evaluated by its fidelity to the verse.

Pictorial space is another important feature of Chughtai's visuals. Recognisable forms just as figure, building, foliage and other atmospheric entities remain rooted though the painter frequently draws upon the poetic and imagined landscapes for his compositions. He arranges them in a coherent way that helps the viewer enter into his pictorial world with comfort (fig: 1& 2)



Figure 2: Aurangzeb اورنگزیب

Chughtai's adaptation of the Japanese wash technique, combined with his refined linear drawing and carefully controlled colour harmonies, contributes to the lyrical quality of the visuals.

To resonate with the lyrical character of the verses the painter adapted Japanese wash technique along with refined linear work. Visual rhythm is achieved via controlled palette and smooth transitions of tones. Technique in his visuals is acting as expressive device and not as a preference in style. This entire approach translates the atmospheric pulse of the verses into pictorial forms. Marcela Sirhindi, eminent critic on Pakistani art acknowledges his mastery of skill in the following words.

“The art of A.R. Chughtai must be recognized as the earliest and truest form of national expression. Chughtai use of colour, skill as a draftsman, originality, imagination, and sense of humour (in his art) have yet to be equalled in Pakistan (Sirhindi 1992).”

Equally significant is Chughtai's treatment of metaphor. Readers of Iqbal know that the poet frequently communicates philosophical ideas through symbolic imagery instead of relying on direct statement. Chughtai responds by extending these metaphors visually instead of explaining them literally. The representation of deserts, birds, clouds, trees, and human figures in his visuals become symbolic agents. They participate fully in the philosophical discourse initiated by the poet. In

works such as *The Desert in Love* fig: 3, landscape itself assumes an active expressive role. It does not simple providing narrative background instead reflecting emotional and spiritual conditions. The visual environment thus becomes an extension of the poem's symbolic universe.



Figure 3: *The Desert in Love*

دیکھ آ کر کوچہ چاک گریباں میں کبھی
قیس تو، لیلیٰ بھی تو، صحرا بھی تو، محمل بھی تو

Likewise Chughtai's figures avoid excessive realism or theatrical expression. Their gestures remain restrained with their emotions controlled, and their physical beauty idealised. The restrained could even be read in the title he has chosen. Instead of captioning love in the desert he flips the situation preferring spiritual over sensual. The painter knows that the restrained approach would resonate with the ethical quality of the verses hence choses refined, dignified and contemplative while expressing the ideas of love, longing or separation. as seen in fig:3. He keeps the composition setting almost palpable and renders it realistically. Figures are arranged as we see in real-life so is the landscape elements like trees or desert or birds and clouds. Furthermore, the treatment of the elements and the quality of line he uses also make the viewer access/experience the world. Realism also serves as a means to reduce the distance between the reader/viewer and the image. The more common details one notices, the closer to the represented world one is. While keeping a tight grip on his style that is so characteristic of him, he thus maintains the intellectual atmosphere of the verses.

This leads to another remarkable achievements of visuals done for *Amal-e-Chughtai*. And that is their ability to sustain multiple levels of interpretation even when it comes to captioning the works see fig: 3 the painter has kept this concept in mind. Viewers unfamiliar with Iqbal's poetry may appreciate the visuals as independent artistic compositions. While readers acquainted with the verses

encounter additional layers of meaning. This happens through the interaction between text and image. Instead of reducing the complexity of the poems, the illustrations actually encourage renewed engagement with the literary source. Consequently viewers are invited to reconsider familiar verses through visual experience.

As the discussion is being made on the reception of the verses in the visuals there is yet another element of the verses i.e. sacredness of the language which is carried well in the visuals too. It is a known fact that the poet under discussion is not concerned with sensual pleasure as he always speaks of a higher world. The senses that are being evoked through the system of verbal imagery, similes, and metaphors that Iqbal uses are enhanced through their visuals. If Iqbal favours beauty and sublimity both, the artists also do not seem to be overlooking this chief component of his philosophy. They do it with the help of carefully chosen visual language they both adopted in their visuals which is in contrast to their regular practice.

The painter's approach therefore demonstrates that illustration need not be understood as subordinate to literature. Hence painter's visuals neither replace nor merely reproduce the poet's verses on the contrary they establish an interpretative dialogue in which both media contribute to the generation of meaning. The resulting works exemplify how poetic imagination may be transformed into visual language while preserving the philosophical depth and symbolic richness of the verses.

Visual Reception of Iqbal in Sadequain's Works

While Abdur Rahman Chughtai approached Iqbal's poetry through lyrical figuration and symbolic pictorial narratives, Syed Sadequain Naqvi developed an entirely different mode of visual engagement. His interpretation of Iqbal's verses emerged through a language characterised by expressive line, monumental composition, calligraphy, and philosophical intensity (Manzoor 2024). More than being interested in recreating the poetic imagery through pictorial scenes, the painter sought to embody the intellectual and spiritual force of poet's ideas within the very structure of the visual image. Resultingly his works therefore represent visual manifestations of philosophical thought than mere illustrations.

Sadequain's artistic practice demonstrates a lifelong engagement with literature, philosophy, and the written word. As both painter and poet, he occupied a unique position among modern Pakistani artists even in the current research also, enabling him to negotiate the relationship between verbal and visual expression from within both disciplines. His familiarity with classical Urdu and Persian literature, together with his own poetic practice seems to be allowing him to engage with Iqbal's verses not as literary texts but as intellectual propositions capable of visual transformation.

Unlike *Amal-e-Chughtai*, where text and image while functioning in dialogue generally remain distinct, Sadequain appears frequently incorporating the poetic verse into the composition itself fig. 4. This new role assigned to the text where it plays as text, line, rhythm and form the conventional boundary between reading and seeing is dissolved. The verse now participating as visual into the visual.



Figure 4: *The Holy Sinner*, Treasures State Bank of Pakistan, Mohatta Palace Karachi

Following are the verses that are integrated into the visual.

اپنی جولاں گاہ زیر آسمان سمجھا تھا میں
 آب و گل کے کھیل کو اپنا جہاں سمجھا تھا میں
 بے حجابی سے تری ٹوٹا نگاہوں کا طلسم
 اک ردائے نیلگوں کو آسمان سمجھا تھا میں
 کارواں تھک کر فضا کے پیچ و خم میں رہ گیا
 مہروماہ و مشتری کو ہم غناں سمجھا تھا میں
 عشق کی اک جست نے طے کر دیا قصہ تمام
 اس زمین و آسمان کو بے کراں سمجھا تھا میں

(A. Iqbal, Bal e Jibril 1935)

Not limiting to the composition the approach is evident in the portraiture too See fig 5. *Portrait of Iqbal* (1977). The painter doesn't restrict himself to only depicting the facial features. The echoing silhouettes of the face reinforces the poet's personality as he looks upwards towards a galactic formation. Besides representing the facial resemblance, the painter makes an effort to capture and convey the inner soul of the poet. The visual becomes a philosophical symbol rather than a narrative character. Same approach goes for the complex compositions fig: 4 & 8 where dynamic layouts are constructed to communicate struggle, aspiration, endurance, and spiritual awakening themes. The painter is adamant to express underlying philosophical conditions than illustrating events.

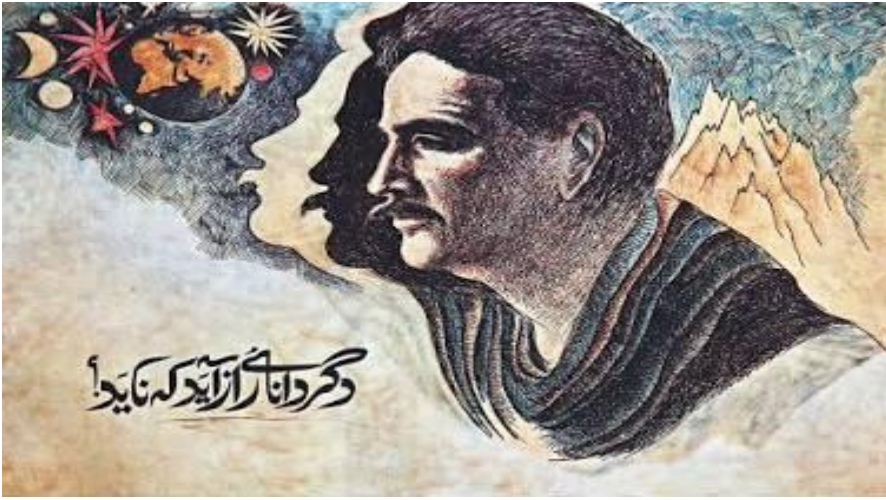


Figure 5: Portrait of Iqbal



Figure: 6 & 7 Details of figures 2 & 4 respectively

Above close ups from both painters present glimpse of the difference in the approach towards line and space.

The formal characteristics of Sadequain's visuals correspond closely with the intellectual intensity of Iqbal's poetry. He is less concerned with the anatomical accuracy and more interested in fragmented & exaggerated figures that suggest concepts such as *khudi* (selfhood), struggle, inner conflict and continuous becoming occupy a central position fig 8.



Figure 8: *Aftaab-e-Taaza*, 1.8 m, source: Unicorn Gallery

To resonates with the poet's recurring conception of the self actualising individual the painter presents protagonists that embody intellectual and spiritual striving. Muscular forms are employed to communicate labour, struggle, determination and transcendence.

This takes us to another distinguishing feature of his way of interpretation and that is his use of monumentality. Here monumentality shall be taken as an aesthetic strategy more than a physical reality. The sole reading experience of poet's ideas is transformed into a visual pubic presence through the enlarged scale.

Here Sadequain treats the pictorial space idea differently than Chughtai. His use of symbolism also differs fundamentally from Chughtai's. Chughtai's symbols tend to preserve the lyrical atmosphere of the poem, whereas Sadequain's imagery often intensifies its philosophical and existential dimensions. Upcoming part of the study elaborates on the difference in their strategies to bring the verses into the visual world.

As the discussion is being made on the reception of the verses in the visuals of both painters, there is yet another element of the verses i.e. sacredness of the language which is carried well in the visuals too. It is a known fact that the poet under discussion is not concerned with sensual pleasure as he always speaks of a higher world. The senses that are being evoked through the system of verbal imagery, similes, and metaphors that the poet uses are enhanced through their visuals. If Iqbal favors beauty and sublimity both, the artists also do not seem to be overlooking this chief component of his philosophy. They do it with the help of carefully chosen visual language they both adopted in their visuals which is in contrast to their regular practice.

Together, the works of these two artists demonstrate that while remaining faithful to the philosophical spirit of the original poetry an all together different visual

language can be generated. Hence it leads us to a comparison of both painters' approaches.

Comparative Visual Interpretations of Iqbal's Poetry

Instead of sticking to visual translation of their poetic source both painters have developed a distinct visual interpretative character. The comparison extends beyond general identification of similarities and difference and is intended to seek understanding of the negotiations both painters have done regarding the complex relationship between the poetic and the visual expression.

Conception of Illustration

The most immediate distinction can be found in how both painters conceive the concept of illustration itself. Chughtai invites the viewers into the imaginative world suggested by the verses via symbolic imagery and pictorial narration. Sadequain, on the contrary dissolves the conventional boundary between literature and painting. Consequently, Chughtai establishes a conversation between text and image, Sadequain integrates both into a unified visual experience.

Two Distinct Mode of Artistic Expression

Characterised by elegance, delicacy, subtle symbolism and contemplative beauty Chughtai translates the poetic atmosphere into lyrical visual narrative. Sadequain's primary vehicle of meaning constitute strong expressive line, monumental scale, and structural tension. If Sadequain emphasizes more on intellectual struggle, spiritual aspiration, and existential energy, Chughtai expounds on poetic serenity. Both approaches remain faithful to the poet's philosophy, yet illuminate different dimensions of the same poetic universe.

The world of art and creativity revolves and centred around the idea of beauty. The exploration of the ideas of beauty is the nucleus of every artist's quest. *Iqbal* in his poetry does guide in this regard when he expounds on the concept of Jamal and Jalal, their connectedness, and the states that the balance between them shall be the measure of beauty. It seems that the painters in their visuals have tried to revisit those ideas of beauty that existed in the realm of the visual world. *Chughtai* we all know is an artist who loved the splendiddness of man and nature and did express, while illustrating the verses, not only in the physical forms but in the technique also in which he painted them. Whereas in *Saddequain's* imagery a viewer comes across another kind of exquisiteness that stems out of aggression, violence, vulnerability. Now in an overview, while looking at both painter's work Sadequain seems to be having more Jalal in his work than Jamal, unlike *Chughtai* who has more potion of Jamal than Jalal in his creative concoction. This could be argued as Iqbal favored a balance between *Jamal* and *Jalal* it could be said that both painters never ignoring this philosophy of Iqbal did manage to have balance via one to the other. In *Chughtai* the sublime (*Jalal*) is achieved through beauty whereas in *Sadequian's* the *Jamal* (Beauty) is accomplished through Jalal (sublime).

Treatment of Symbolism

The artists also differ significantly in their treatment of symbolism. Chughtai's use of symbols extends the symbolic imagery whereas Sadequain symbolism is more condensed (Manzoor 2024). The approach could individually be observed. For example a comparable distinction may be seen in their treatment of the human

figure. Chughtai's figures possess elegance, refinement, and emotional restraint inhabiting poetic landscapes. Sadequain's figures, by contrast, appear muscular, elongated, and dynamically articulated communicating labour and resilience.

Method and Material

Divergent artistic philosophies are further reinforced with the help of methods and materials. Mastery of wash technique, controlled tonal harmonies, and flowing linear rhythms result in visuals that are characterised by softness and lyrical continuity complementing the cadence of poet's verses. In Sadequain's visuals on the contrary, technique itself becomes a philosophical statement. His expressive calligraphic line, monumental compositions and vigorous brush work embody the intellectual energy that defines much of Iqbal's poetry.

Word Image Relationship

In a poem, the verses are read through word by word. To complete the reading process, one has to read every word. The case in painting is different. The viewer rests an eye on the visual and the visual technical devices start taking his eye and let it wander all across the canvas may not be focusing or going through every inch of a canvas. e.g in *Chughtai's* visuals. However, in *Sadequain's* mural, the look is fragmented. Example. This perhaps is since Sadequain unlike *Chughtai* did some interpretations also of the verses in the visuals and not only the illustration that strictly follows the text content.

The verses which were chosen by the artists, we all know were created in their own right. And Iqbal wrote them without any prior knowledge that they would someday inspire some visual artists hence they have their existence without any dependency on the illustrated material. The work in *Amal e Chughtai* is based on a variety of texts by the poet which includes both Urdu and Persian. On the other hand, Sadequain paints the verses in the form of the calligraphic script making them an integral part of the visual.

Iqbal's verses are straightforward and are written in a clear language but the painter's visual becomes complicated when it takes on a different language. *Chughtai's* visuals could worth a thousand words. One needs to know the verse to decode the visual. See Fig:5. However, in Fig:6 the presence of the verse inside the visual is a device that helps the onlooker to grasp the happening else it would be difficult for the viewer to comprehend the clock replaced faces of the horses and the man's hand pointing towards the sky! Such details are seemingly insignificant yet are effective strategies.

From above discussion it is quite evident that the most significant difference between the two artists lies in their understanding of the relationship between word and image. Chughtai generally preserves the independence of each medium. Sadequain, reading and viewing become inseparable experiences as the painter collapses the distinction. These contrasting strategies demonstrate that the movement from poetry to painting does not follow a single artistic model but may generate multiple forms of visual engagement.

The tradition of text image relationship already exists in Indo Persianate manuscript culture. The above comparison also leads towards a broader reflection within south Asian creative traditions on this new role of visual interpretation that is devised by the two painters. while working within the modern context both painters have established new artistic standards extending this historic dialogue between text and image redefining it for 21st century Pakistani art. The visual language in their works reconstructs and not reproduces the literary text. In doing so, they confirm that the relationship between poetry and painting is fundamentally dialogic, where each medium (verse or visual) besides preserving its own expressive autonomy contributes to new dimensions of meaning.

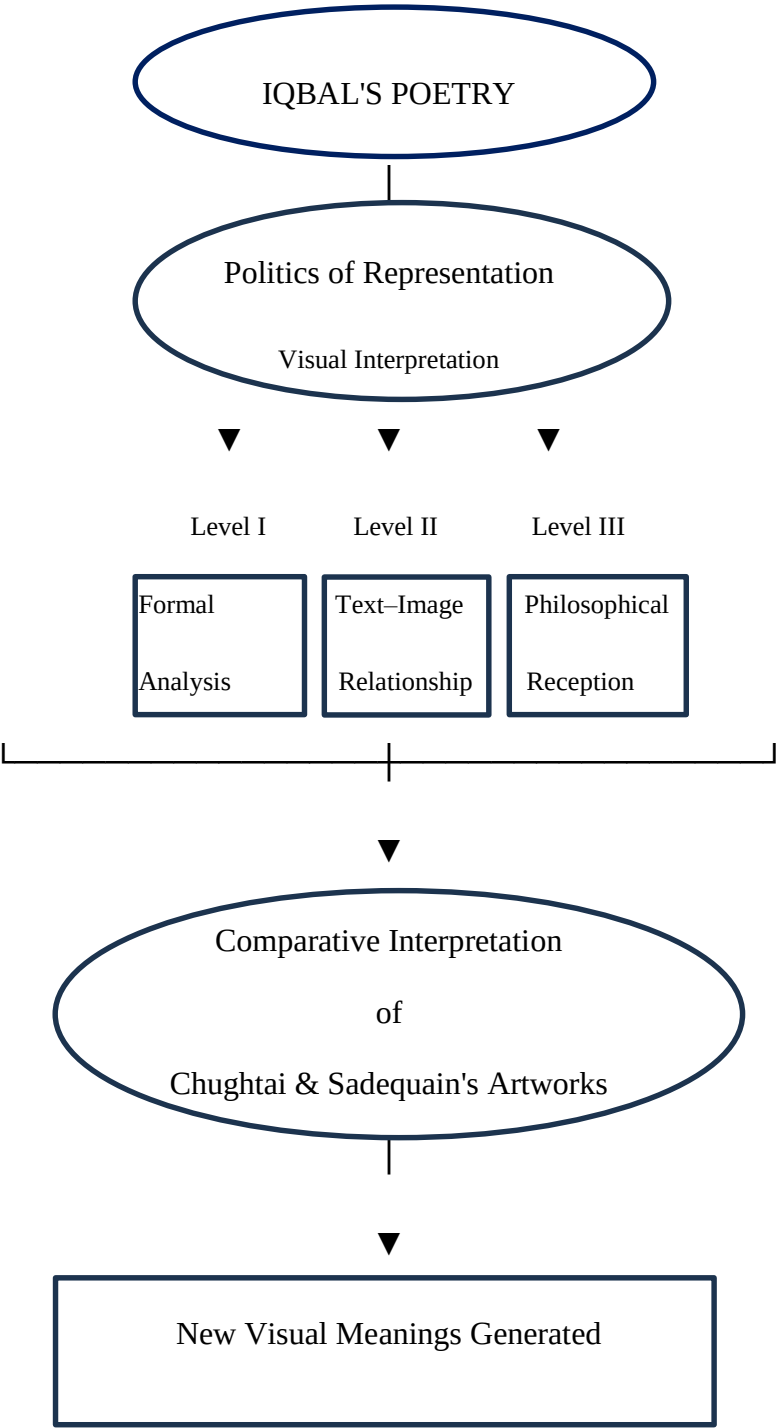
Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine the strategies of visual politics while interpreting the poetry by Allama Iqbal by the two distinguished artists of their times. The comparative analysis have highlighted how their works instead of being direct representation of political events have served as sites of meaning making in the context of socio cultural and socio political scenario. Through visual strategies they mediate philosophical ideas concerning selfhood, cultural identity, morality, and modernity. The study consequently suggests that the political significance of visual culture may also be explored by which ideas are embodied, circulated, and reinterpreted across cultural forms.

The findings additionally contribute to the growing scholarship on modern South Asian art by repositioning Chughtai and Sadequain. Their works demonstrate that the politics of visual interpretation constitutes an important form of cultural reception in which literary texts continue to evolve through new artistic media. This perspective broadens our understanding of the enduring relationship between literature, painting, and philosophy in twentieth-century Pakistan.

A multi tier comparative analytical framework is a significant contribution of this current study. The three interconnected levels of analysis, formal artistic vocabulary, the text and image relationship, and the philosophical reception of poetic ideas are the complementary perspectives. The devised framework has enabled the study to move beyond stylistic comparison and helped the researcher to demonstrate that the transition from poetic language to visual language is not a process of direct translation but one of interpretation, negotiation, and artistic re-articulation.

The suggested framework may also offer a methodological model for future comparative studies involving literature and visual art within South Asian and broader Islamic artistic traditions.



The present study is necessarily limited to selected works by two artists and therefore does not encompass the full range of visual engagements with Iqbal's poetry. Future research may extend this inquiry by examining additional artists, different artistic media, illustrated editions of literary texts, or comparative examples from Persian, Ottoman, and Mughal manuscript traditions. Such investigations would further illuminate the diverse ways in which poetic thought continues to inspire visual expression across cultures and historical periods.

Conflict of Interest

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