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An Analytical Study of the Structure and Manner of Blank Verse in Pashto Literature

Hameedullah Omarkhel¹ 

Ph.D.Senior Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Education, Balkh University

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Abstract

Scholars generally agree that blank verse possesses a distinct structure; however, there remains no comprehensive or universally applicable framework across languages. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a structural critique and analytical exploration of blank verse in Pashto literature. Employing descriptive and explanatory methods, the article examines the defining features of Pashto blank verse, with particular attention to the arrangement and harmony of sounds, words, and phrases. Furthermore, it distinguishes Pashto blank verse from other modern poetic forms, including free verse and prose poetry. The findings reveal that the structure of Pashto blank verse demonstrates unique characteristics that differentiate it from its counterparts in other languages.

Keywords: Blank verse, free verse, prose poetry, Pashto literature, modern

¹. Email: omarkhelhameedullah@gmail.com

1. Introduction and Statement of the Research Problem

Structure and form are essential components of poetry and literature as a whole. This topic remains a complex and often - debated issue in Pashto poetry. In the Pashto language, free verse - and more broadly, modern or non-traditional poetry - has been practiced since the 20th century. Various poets have written poems and verses using different frameworks of free verse. However, the structural forms or frameworks of free verse have not yet been clearly or comprehensively defined.

The structures of free verse in Pashto differ somewhat from those in other languages. According to contemporary literary scholars, the structure of free verse in Pashto predates that of English and other languages. In this context, Makhzan-ul-Islam by Akhund Darweza is often cited as an early example of free verse. This research focuses on the form of blank verse (a widely used style of free verse in Pashto today) and discusses its structure and characteristics.

The structure and nature of blank verse, and more broadly of free verse in Pashto, need to be clarified. Most readers and students are more familiar with the structured, rhymed forms of classical poetry. However, without understanding the distinctions between different types of free verse, it may become difficult - especially for beginners - to properly interpret or write such poetry.

In Pashto, blank verse deviates from traditional metric rules. Furthermore, what is referred to as “blank verse” in English is structurally different from blank verse in Pashto. Despite the common belief that Pashto free verse has been borrowed from English, these differences make it necessary to explore and define the unique characteristics of Pashto blank verse.

The purpose of this research is to analyze and evaluate the structure and characteristics of blank verse in Pashto literature so that readers and enthusiasts of this form can understand it better. It also aims to help prevent the rise of disorganized blank verse and to encourage the writing of well-structured poetry in the future.

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Does blank verse in Pashto have a specific structure and framework? If so, what is it?
- How does it differ from free verse in other languages?
- In which areas can these differences be observed?

Although some prior work has touched on this topic - discussing poetry and verse in general or the history and types of free verse - there has been no

dedicated book or article specifically addressing Pashto blank verse. Notable related works include:

- Pashto Nazm Pohena (Pashto Poetics) by Dr. Lal Pacha Azmoon
- Pukhto She'ar senga Jorige (How Pashto Poetry is Formed) by Dr. Majawar Ahmad Zyar
- She'aristan by Dr. Ehsanullah Darmal
- Nawi She'ar pa Pukhto Adab ke (Modern Poetry in Pashto Literature) by Dr. Latif Bahand (2016)

While these books and articles are valuable, there remains a clear need for focused research on Pashto blank verse.

This research employs a descriptive–analytical method. Primary sources include selected poems by contemporary Pashto poets, while secondary sources consist of scholarly works on Pashto poetics and modern poetry. The study analyzes structural elements (meter, rhyme, rhythm), stylistic features (imagery, conciseness, sentence flexibility), and conceptual aspects (themes, symbolic depth) of blank verse. Comparative analysis with English and Persian traditions is also conducted to identify similarities and differences

This article is based on a range of academic and literary sources related to Pashto blank verse and free verse poetry. The materials used include scholarly books on Pashto poetics and modern poetry, such as works by Dr. Lal Pacha Azmoon, Majawar Ahmad Zyar, Dr. Latif Bahand, and Ehsanullah Darman. forms of free verse in Pashto and other languages were consulted. Selected poems by contemporary Pashto poets were also analyzed to examine structural patterns, stylistic features, and the linguistic characteristics of blank verse. These texts provided a solid foundation for comparative analysis between blank verse, prose poetry, and Monday (Short) poetry, and helped identify key differences between Pashto and other languages' approaches to blank verse.

2. Definition of Blank Verse

In English, blank verse refers to a type of poetry known as "Spin Sher" in Pashto. The word "blank" means pale, white, or colorless. It originates from the French word "blanc," which is related to brightness or whiteness. In Spanish, it is pronounced blanco, and in Italian, bianco. The term verse simply means poetry or a line of poetry. Blank verse is defined as poetry that follows a specific metrical pattern - iambic pentameter (five pairs of syllables per line, each pair having an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one.) - But does not use rhyme (Shaw, 2007, p.139).

There are two prevailing schools of thought regarding the structure of blank verse. One claims that blank verse contains neither meter nor rhyme, while the other asserts that it retains meter but lacks rhyme. Both viewpoints will be examined by presenting definitions from proponents of each side.

Historically, blank verse was first introduced into English literature by Henry Howard (16th century), a prominent English poet. He translated parts of classical texts and the Bible from Italian into English using a poetic form he termed blank verse. Interestingly, the publishing society that released this collection referred to it as having a "strange and unusual meter" (Shaw, 2007, p.139).

According to Qalandarzada (2020), blank verse lacks the traditional components of a poem such as couplets or verses; rather, it consists of poetic lines without meter, though it still contains internal rhythm and musicality (Takbook.com, December 12, 2020).

Shafiei Kadkani (2011) also describes blank verse as poetry without meter, noting that its roots in Persian literature can be traced back nearly 1,200 years (p. 311).

Additionally, the view of Ahmad Shamloo, a key figure in Persian blank verse, is also important in understanding the concept. However, as Falaki (2001) points out, the form of blank verse in world literature significantly differs from that developed by Shamloo (p. 128).

Ahmad Shamloo defines blank verse as follows:

"Blank verse may not necessarily lack rhythm, rhyme, or imagery - it is not deprived of them but rather free from their constraints. It does not seek these elements, nor does it reject them entirely. It is a form of poetry that refuses to confine itself to conventional frameworks. It shows indifference-even resistance - to artificial structure, using thought as its guiding force rather than rhyme or formula. Blank verse avoids ornamental form and reveals its essence in formlessness" (Mojabi, 1381, p. 451).

In literary terminology, blank verse refers to a metrical composition without rhyme. In Western literature, this form has a long history and has been used in many dramatic works, such as Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* and *The Little Tragedy* (Shinwari, 2014, p. 309).

Those who do not support the inclusion of meter in blank verse argue that if someone expresses their poetic imagination through simple literary prose without any metrical constraints, it can still be considered blank verse.

3. Structure of Pashto Blank Verse

First, we will look at the structure of blank verse poetry in English.

The meter used in blank verse is iambic pentameter, which consists of five metrical feet per line. An iamb is made up of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, and pentameter means the line contains five such feet. In other words, each line of blank verse typically has ten syllables, divided into five units (feet), with each unit comprising one unstressed and one stressed syllable. For example, consider a line from the English Romantic poet John Keats:

A thing | of beau | ty is | a joy | for ever
Its love | liness | increas | es it | will never

Blank verse has a strong resemblance to literary prose, but it is distinguished by the above-mentioned metrical rule. Occasionally, literary prose may contain lines that resemble blank verse in form and rhythm - such as: "It is a dark night; the lamp whispered your name." However, John Vane (1990) clearly distinguishes between prose and blank verse, stating that "Prose is like walking, while blank verse is like dancing" (p. 111).

Dr. Mujawir Ahmad Zyar defines blank verse as a form of poetry that has meter but no rhyme, and is composed in a rhythmic style using highly fragmented poetic sentences, often containing three to four tonic or rhythmic peaks, without being divided into traditional stanzas.

According to him, Pashto blank verse, in its true form, may correspond to European non-traditional (prose) poetry or share similarities with Persian poetic forms and imagery. In Persian, "she'r-e sefid" (white poem) is a type of poetry that could, in principle, align with Khalil bin Ahmad's Arabic metrical system (aruz, such as mafa'ilu). Similar to Pashto free verse, its rhythm and tone are structured based on beats and cadences, rather than rigid rhyme schemes.

In Pashto literature, as Zyar notes, the term "blank verse" is used only to refer to poetic frameworks (poetic images or structures). These frameworks, unlike those of free verse, lack a fixed metrical or rhythmic pattern and typically consist of very short poetic statements, often symbolic or metaphorical, with elevated intellectual content. These structures are aesthetically rich and, if developed with more structure and rhythm, they may transition into free verse. However, if they naturally attain meter without requiring significant revision, they are no longer considered blank verse, but rather classified as free verse. (Zyar, August 13, 2017, Tand.com) Dr. Zyar describes blank verse as non-rhymed and non-metrical poetry, which-much like free verse-draws heavily from native Pashto folklore. Its

roots can be traced to folk expressions such as storytelling chants (narey), children's songs, proverbs, and humorous sayings.

This form of poetry is typically divided into short and long rhythmic segments. A blank verse poem usually conveys a single image and a focused message, and it does not exceed beyond short or extended fragments. If it does, it may no longer be considered blank verse and instead be categorized as prose poetry.

An Example of Structure in Blank Verse :

"Let me..."

"Bloom in the garden of your face,"

"And become the flower of your chest..."

Here we will analyze and interpret a blank verse poem by Dr. Mujawir Ahmad Zyar - one that he and other poets have identified as an example of Pashto blank verse.

The House of Love (by Dr. Mujawir Ahmad Zyar)

Sta danga wuna

Da sparli da shairaziyo

Da payakht nasha wa

Walaara ao bela taana

Wolambal bagh pa khpulo sro weno ke

Sta danga wuna

Da baran da wredo zeri wa

Walaara ao bela taana

Pa shundo wuch sho

Da khandawo fasal

Your tall tree

Was a symbol of spring's blessings,

A sign of endurance.

It stood - and without you,

The garden bathed in its own red blood.

Your tall tree

Was a herald of rain.

It stood - and without you,

The season of laughter

Dried up on the lips.

There are different opinions about blank verse; in Pashto, it is said that the absence of metrical (arūzi) meter in blank verse gives the poet creative freedom. In other words, blank verse does not follow meter or rhyme, but attention to internal music and ton is necessary. The combination of words

is very important in blank verse, as seen in phrases like “tall tree,” “spring’s freshness,” and “season of laughter.” These combinations require deep thought and patience, making their creation a challenging and precise artistic task.

Another important element in blank verse is the creation of parallel structure (*qarīnah*) - a balanced relationship between lines. This means that both upper and lower lines should relate or mirror each other in some meaningful way. For example, in the poem by Majawar Ahmad Zyar, the word rain is introduced, followed later by references to the season and its drying, establishing a thematic and structural parallel.

Another feature of blank verse is the flexibility in sentence structure. As mentioned earlier, since blank verse lacks traditional metric constraints, the poet has full freedom to rearrange words and sentence elements. For example, in the last two lines of the poem mentioned earlier, the original sentence could have been something like "The season of laughter dried on the lips," or simply "The season dried." Normally, in prose or formal grammar, the subject comes first, followed by the verb. However, in blank verse, it is common in all types of poetry, where the natural sequence of sentence elements can be altered for poetic effect.

Blank verse also tends to favor brevity or conciseness - conveying complex meanings in just a few words. That is, the poet attempts to express feelings, concepts, and imagery using minimal language. Since blank verse is not bound by traditional meter or rhyme, it relies on concise expression, strong imagery, internal rhythm, and deep semantic content to maintain its emotional and aesthetic impact. In this kind of poetry, lengthy explanations are avoided, repetition is minimal or absent, and each word carries significant weight. The poet offers only hints or suggestions, while the reader is left to interpret and complete the meaning themselves.

In blank verse, emotion and imagery are essential - both concrete (sensory) and abstract (mental) imagery. For example, a concrete image is something that can be felt or touched:

My father was a laborer,
A man of faith,
He always prayed,
Even God
Was ashamed of his hands.

This is a vivid, sensory image grounded in physical and observable details. An abstract image, on the other hand, is something that cannot be touched or directly observed - like dreams, love, or heartache.

At times, in blank verse, two lines are separated by the word "and" to create musicality and rhythm. Also, wherever a natural pause occurs, the poet typically moves to the next line. This line break functions like a breath or a shift in rhythm.

In his 2018 work, Darmal presents an example of blank verse and discusses its external structure, considering the external form of the following poem to be representative of contemporary blank verse. This is because the poem's lines are not connected through consistent meter or rhythmic flow (p. 556).

Mr. Ehsanullah Darmal has cited the following poem by Waman Niazi and analyzed both its external and internal (mental) structure.

Noor

Zra me day

Da haghə par mərəy

Na-āshnā khattāti wakṛəm

Rang ba da obo la siuri wākhləm

Ao karkay bāyad la munāsib

Noora rābēl krəm

Kho che shpa pəxa she

(Darmal, 2018, p. 556)

Light

My heart

Wants to do unfamiliar calligraphy

On her throat.

I will take color

From the shadow of water,

And I must separate the window

From proper light - But only when the night deepens.

On page 447 of his book "Shearistan", Ehsanullah Darmal writes about the rhythm of blank verse: "Although Pashto free verse contains uneven meters, it still carries a particular rhythm. And if we remove this hidden structure from free verse, we would be stripping away one of poetry's key elements - rhythm - and we would then create at what is called blank verse." (Darmal, 2018, p. 447).

From this view, it becomes clear that even in free verse, there is a subtle rhythm and structure. However, if that rhythm disappears, the poem is then classified as blank verse.

Dr. Ehsanullah Darmal, therefore, differs from the European and Western definitions of blank verse in that he does not recognize any formal meter in Pashto blank verse. Although Darmal emphasizes the role of syllables in

free verse, which gives the poem a kind of rhythm, he draws a clear distinction between blank verse and free verse based on the presence or absence of measurable rhythm or weight.

In summary, the form of blank verse as defined by Europeans and English writers does not fully apply to Pashto poetry. As a result, differentiating among new poetic forms in Pashto remains somewhat challenging.

4. The Nature of Modern Pashto blank Verse Poetry

According to Professor Bahand (2016), unfortunately, little attention has been paid to modern poetry either in terms of translation or during the process of innovation and creation. As a result, shortcomings are clearly visible in certain areas. One could say that modern poetry may be weak and lacking in terms of rhythm or meter; however, these are still our first steps - and taking the first step is not something everyone can do. The reason for these shortcomings is also quite clear: Pashto poetry has been in poor condition for a long time. This decline is largely due to unfavorable conditions and environment (p. 28).

Regarding modern poetry, Professor Bahand states:

“Pashto modern verse is progressing step by step, day by day, toward development and strength, and is reaching toward the heights of beauty. For this reason, some poets consider themselves entitled to lay the foundation for a new metrical system suited to modern poetry. Free verse (modern poetry) is a relatively new phenomenon in Eastern literature, and in Pashto as well, the tradition of free verse was introduced in the latter half of the 20th century. In Pashto literature, free verse emerged through the imitation of European poetry and found its way into our literary tradition through Western influence” (Bahand, 2016, p. 51).

In the beginning, blank verse poetry was only liberated from rhyme and line, while still maintaining consistent syllabic structure across its lines. However, it soon also let go of that regularity in syllabic flow, and lines began to appear with varying lengths and rhythms. Yet, when read aloud, the poem retained a kind of harmony from beginning to end, creating a unified musicality. This ensured that the transitions between lines did not feel disjointed or jarring, and there was no awkward pause or disruption in the poem’s rhythm as it moved from one line to the next.

According to Professor Zyar, blank verse is a form of fully liberated poetry. Regarding free verse, Abrams states that it is a type of poetry that does not follow meter or rhyme (Abrams, 1993, p. 331).

Professor Azmoon, on the other hand, states that free verse is not only free from the constraints of rhyme, but also liberated from fixed meter, syllabic

balance between lines, and other traditional prosodic restrictions (Azmoon, 2015, p. 8).

Professor Zyar, referring to free verse (which he equates with free-form poetry), writes: "By free Pashto verse, we mean that rhythmic poetry which, despite being unrhymed, has no fixed standard in terms of line length. Its lines may vary from as short as a single phonemic syllable to as long as forty or forty-five syllables" (Zyar, 2011, p. 318).

Jafari (2008) writes: "Free verse poetry is divided into three categories. First, semi-free verse: These are poems that do not follow a regular metrical pattern; some parts contain rhyme, while others do not, and there is some presence of meter. Second, blank verse (Sher Sapid), attributed to Ahmad Shamlou as its founder. In this type of poetry, meter and rhyme are not emphasized. Its distinction from prose lies in the style of expression. Instead of metrical rhythm, it relies on internal and semantic music. Third, new wave poetry (She'r- e Mowj-e Now), which lacks meter, rhyme, and even internal or semantic rhythm. What separates it from prose is solely the poetic imagination and the mode of expression." (Jafari, 2008, pp. 196 - 199).

According to Shamisa (2008): "Free verse poetry can be classified into three types based on its structure. First, the semi-formal type, which is referred to as free verse. This type of poetry has metrical rhythm, but the length of the lines is not limited to the traditional two, three, or four hemistiches; rather, it can exceed four. The rhyme does not follow a fixed pattern. Second, the inclusive type, also called blank verse (Sepid She'r). This form has rhythm and melody but lacks classical meter, and the rhyme does not occur in fixed positions. Ahmad Shamlou's poems fall into this category. Third, the new wave poetry, which neither has classical meter nor rhythm and melody like blank verse. However, it differs from prose in its style of expression, poetic language, and semantic melody" (p. 316).

Professor Mujawar Ahmad Zyar divides the forms of Pashto free poetry into two categories: semi-free and fully free, with the semi-free category further subdivided into different types. First, semi-free verse: These are patterns where the lines are not uniform in terms of syllable count, but the rhythm is maintained. This means that the repetition of stressed syllables occurs in a regular manner, and rhyme words appear occasionally.

This category includes free patterns, truncated poems (mondi), canto, sonnet, and haiku (Zyar, 2010, p.344).

If we do not clearly distinguish between the forms of free poetry, this may pose difficulties for beginner readers. For example, in Pashto, blank verse departs from the rules of meter, while in English, the poems categorized as

free verse differ from the Pashto concept, even though many believe that the framework of free poetry was adopted from English.

Free verse poetry does not follow traditional metrical patterns and lacks rhyme and refrain, but it still contains rhythm, meter, and musicality. This type of poetry is also called modern poetry or blank verse. Some people consider free verse to be free even from meter; however, rhythm and musicality are fundamental elements of poetry. In free verse, there is no rhyme or refrain, and the number and pattern of syllabic beats are not fixed or uniform. Instead, free verse subtly follows the musicality (tone) of poetry in an implicit way, which requires great skill and careful attention (Hashimi, 2002, p. 60).

Here, we should briefly pause to consider Professor Zyar's explanation regarding the difference between Pashto and English verse:

“As mentioned in the definition of free blank verse, the European terms ‘blank verse’ in French (blanch vers) and German (blank vers) do not correspond to our Spin Sher (blank verse), but rather align with what we call semi-free verse. Their free verse corresponds not to our free verse, but to our blank verse, which closely resembles prose. In short, their ‘blank’ is equivalent to our ‘semi-free,’ and their ‘free’ corresponds to our ‘blank verse’ and prose alike” (Zyar, 2010, p. 435).

Free verse poetry must maintain its poetic quality across its various forms and styles. No specific fixed form has been identified for it so far, and it includes many types, one of which is called blank verse (Rafiq, 2018, p. 157).

An Example of Free Verse in Pashto (from Abdulrahman Pezhwak's Kalima Dara Rupai)

Yara kho landa da da

Da de la khole na jaar sham

Ma weel senga ba shi

Za pa jagre ta wozam

Da ba pa oshko nasta

Da be kasi na zhari

My friend, it's simple - From her lips, I become a stranger.

I asked, how could this be?

That I go to war,

And she would sit in tears,

Crying over someone abandoned.

5. The Differences between Blank Verse and Other Forms of Free Poetry

Some literary scholars consider Monday (truncated) poetry to represent the concept of fully free verse or poetry. However, others believe that Monday poems should be regarded as early examples of free verse, but not as fully free poetry. For instance, Professor Zyar explains:

“Monday poems are a type of semi-free verse that lacks rhyme, but whose lines maintain a consistent syllabic and metrical (syllabotonic) structure. These poems are seen as rhyme-breaking and among the earliest examples of free verse. However, due to their consistent line length, stress pattern, and syllabic balance, they cannot be classified as fully free verse or poetry” (Niazi, 2016, p.144).

There is a Poem by Khalid Rasheed, quoted by Niazi from Sangarwal’s work)

Bia da guluno pa naazako shundo

Zmoong da kor par khwa yoo zawg raazi

Ya da saaqi da sro pialo pa krang ke

Da dagha waranay dunyagai par leemo (Niazi, 1395, p.144)

Once again, on the delicate lips of flowers,

A murmur rises toward our home.

Or in the clink of the cupbearer’s red goblets,

Upon the lips of this broken little world...

It can be said that Monday (truncated) poetry represents the early examples of free verse. Works like Kalima Dara Rupai and Zanjzani Shamar can be considered strong illustrations of this form.

Some scholars do not differentiate between blank verse and free verse. However, it is generally believed that free verse—formerly referred to as free verse—is poetry that does not follow conventional metrical structures. In contrast, blank verse in Western literature—especially in English—is significant for two key poetic forms: first Dramatic blank verse, and second Epic blank verse. Blank verse, by its form, does not rely on rhyme or meter. Yet this raises an important question: If poetry is not metrical, then what differentiates it from prose? Niazi (2016), quoting Khwaja Nasir, writes:“Poetry is imaginative speech, and poetic imagination is the foundation of poetry—not meter, nor anything else” (p. 148).

Some scholars argue that even if blank verse lacks a strict meter, it still possesses a certain distinctive rhythm and melody. Examples of blank verse can also be found in Pashto poetry. However, due to the unique linguistic structure of the Pashto language, its blank verse has developed a foundation

that is neither identical to the Western blank verse nor can it be classified exactly as fully free verse like theirs.

Professor Zyar considers prose poetry to be as meter less as blank verse, with the difference that blank verse contains an imaginative image and a message, and in Pashto it rarely passes beyond a few limited short lines or verses. In contrast, prose poetry, alongside its literary expression, at minimum includes a narrative element or short story-like examples. (Zyar, 2017, August 13, Taand.net).

In short, the earliest examples of blank verse in Pashto can be seen in Kalima Dara Rupai, which differ somewhat from Western blank verse in terms of syllables, meter, rhythm, and melody. In Pashto, due to dialectal pronunciation variations, sometimes pauses or changes in syllables occur in the recitation of blank or free verse poetry, which does not constitute a flaw.

Prose Poetry: Some scholars do not differentiate between prose poetry and blank verse. Others consider prose poetry to be an advanced form of literary prose, and it is true that prose poetry and literary prose share similarities in that their language is literary and artistic. However, the term blank verse is more common and can refer to literary pieces, short stories, or parts of a novella that contain imagination, poetic qualities, artistry, emotional appeal, as well as internal music and rhythm. Such works are considered prose poetry. Example of prose poetry

Gulghuti che da rangin sahar pa ghayz ke zaan singar kri , Shponde khlasai kri, pre awri margalari ao shi pighla, Bia che shpa shi, spogmai rashi lape lape taira khandi, Ghuti wekha shi, da nime shpa chopti ta bia pa patta khola ghwaregi, Bulbul rashi, bora rashi, shi loy jashn, da morganu, Zra ye bagh shi.

Meaning: The bud adorns itself in the embrace of the colorful morning, Opening its lips, adorned with pearls, becoming a maiden. Then when night falls, the moon arrives and softly smiles at it, the bud awakens, and in the silence of midnight, it quietly unfolds, the nightingale comes, the bee arrives, a great festival begins among the birds, and its heart becomes a garden.

In the West, prose poetry refers to short prose pieces that do not have meter, but they employ poetic elements such as rhythm, beat (cadence), rhyme (alliteration), poetic devices (figures of speech), internal rhyme, and imagery. Because of these features, prose poetry is distinguished from ordinary prose. Additionally, unlike free verse, its lines are not written separately.

The difference between literary prose (artistic prose) and prose poetry is that poetic prose is a literary form of prose that employs poetic features, while prose poetry is a literary genre of poetry expressed within the framework of prose (Sharifi, 2015, p.153).

Blank verse is said to be a type of poetry that does not follow traditional prosodic meter, but it employs the natural rhythm and melody of the language, making it pleasant to the ear when read. It does not fit within conventional prosodic patterns but has its own unique order and structure.

Below is a brief outline of its structure:

- Making sentences melodic, like the rhymed prose of earlier times
- Breaking sentences into short phrases to create musicality
- Repetition of words and phrases at specific intervals
- Using words with similar meter here and there to produce music
- Paying attention to sounds and words and identifying their musical qualities
- Employing the rhetorical device of paronomasia (wordplay) and its types, such as rhyme (saja‘) and repetition (tarsi‘)
- focusing on the musical potential of the living language and avoiding clichés and formal language.

6. Findings and Results

The analysis reveals that Pashto blank verse differs significantly from Western definitions of the form. While English blank verse is defined by iambic pentameter and a consistent metrical framework, Pashto blank verse departs from fixed meter and rhyme, instead relying on internal rhythm, semantic depth, and vivid imagery. This makes it closer in structure to Persian “she’r-e sefid” (white poetry) and European non-traditional verse, though it retains unique features rooted in Pashto oral traditions such as chants, proverbs, and folk songs.

Another key finding is that Pashto blank verse often manifests in short, image-focused poetic units that emphasize symbolic meaning rather than extended narrative or descriptive elaboration. These units may stand independently or be loosely connected by parallel structures (qarīnah), creating thematic balance between lines. The form favors brevity and conciseness, requiring poets to convey complex emotions and ideas through minimal but powerful phrasing.

Finally, the study shows that Pashto blank verse occupies an intermediary space between free verse and prose poetry. Unlike free verse, which may retain elements of rhythm and metrical balance, blank verse abandons these entirely, privileging freedom of expression and word combinations that

generate internal music. Compared to prose poetry, blank verse is more condensed and imagistic, rarely extending into narrative form. These findings highlight the distinctiveness of Pashto blank verse and the urgent need for a clearer theoretical framework to categorize it within modern Pashto literature.

7. Conclusion

What is currently presented as blank verse in Pashto differs from the blank verse found globally, especially in English and other European languages. In English and European traditions, blank verse has a specific meter and distinctive features, often using iambic pentameter. In Pashto, there are also definitional challenges regarding blank verse, and the distinctions between blank verse and other free verse forms have not been clearly made. This has caused confusion in the classification of free poetic forms in Pashto. In Europe, blank verse emerged as a transitional product between the classical and modern worlds; however, in Pashto, blank verse and new free poetic forms are still evolving and awaiting further development.

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