

Hafez and Sufi Hermeneutics

Daryoush Ashouri

Independent Scholar

The usage of an equivocal and highly metaphorical language with its frequent references to historical, legendary, and symbolic figures of Semitic and pre-Islamic Persian origin, has made *Divān* of Hafez the most enigmatic piece of Persian literature for modern minds and, for this reason, the most challenging one. The mastery of its author in simultaneously playing with real, symbolic, and metaphorical meanings of the words in an equivocal manner, has made his poetry extraordinarily responsive to a spectrum of largely incompatible, and even contradictory, interpretative approaches from a host of differing and opposing ideological and philosophical horizons. In recent times, the endeavors of many scholars and enthusiastic admirers of Hafez, mostly Iranians, to decode the puzzle of its language of metaphors and symbols have produced a sizable interpretative body of literature.

The Sufi mystics, with their ancient tradition of reading and decoding poetic texts considered as symbolic expressions of their specific esoteric views, still see in him the most brilliant icon of the spiritual ascetic life, and in his words as authentic mystical exegesis of Qur'an. In this relationship, he is entitled as 'tongue of the invisible world' (*lesān al-ghēyb*) or a highly mysterious voice expressing godly secrets in an allusive language which could be deciphered only by 'men of secrets' (*ahl-e rāz*).

Daryoush Ashouri, "Hafez and Sufi Hermeneutics," *Iran Namag*, Volume 2, Number 2 (Summer 2017), XXXVIII-LX.

Daryoush Ashouri was born in Tehran in 1938. His extensive scholarship examines historical, cultural and linguistic matters of Persia, also as a Third World country encountering modernity. He is author, compiler, and translator of more than 25 books. One of his major works is his hermeneutical, intertextual study of the Divan of Hafez, *'Erfān o rēndi*.

Others, rising out of the avant-garde movement of the modern Iranian intelligentsia, on the contrary, consider him the greatest libertine and blasphemous figure amongst the classical Persian poets. Still some interpreters of Hafez from the extreme right wing of Iranian nationalism carrying enthusiastic anti-Arab and anti-Islamic views, by referring to his frequent recalling of the historical and legendary political and spiritual figures of the ancient Persian history, like Jamshid, Dārā, and Zoroaster, in an extremely arbitrary way they consider his words as thoroughly allusive expressions of complete adhesion to the original ‘Persian’ world views which reflect an anti-Islamic spirit. They go so far to ascribe Hafez to a hypothetical esoteric sect, living until his time as a relic of the aboriginal pre-Islamic religion of Mithraism. Finally, some ardent leftists, driven by their essentially presentist concerns, depict Hafez as a severe social critic and, somehow, a politically militant figure.

In spite of my continuous study of the vast literature produced on the *Divān* of Hafez, my quest for disclosing the enigma of his poetry from a modern point of view never attained a satisfactory response for decades. In this way, his oeuvre remained for me, like many other readers, the most complex mystery of Persian culture, ultimately unattainable by a logically acceptable approach. In this regard, certain obvious obstacles have played a part in complicating the interpretive task. One example is the impossibility of arranging the *ghazals* of the *Divān*, except a few number, according to their exact date of composition, for disclosing clearly their possible biographical or historical connotations. Another important obstacle is the poet’s intentional playful tone which strives to conceal, in a mystical manner, its deeper layers of meanings expressed in a secret allusive tongue, indecipherable by ‘strangers’ (*nā-mahramān*). In the end, from a modern analytical point of view, it seems to me that the absence of a properly applicable methodological device, until now, has been the main obstacle for such a hermeneutical assignment.

Sufi hagiography interprets images, terms, and imaginary figures appearing as persons in the *Divān* in accordance with its own traditional way of reading. This tradition regards Hafez as a saintly figure inspired by the Occult World (*ālam-e ghēyb*), and, in this manner, sets him at the highest rank in its pantheon of poet-saints. But such readings hardly satisfy the modern mind that aims to understand the *Divān* as a text produced by its own specific historical circumstances. In this respect, the only factual element is the pervasive presence of the vocabulary, allusions, imagery and symbols in the *Divān* common to the poetics of mystical love in Persian language. This specific language establishes the undeniable genealogical affinity of the *Divān* to other Sufi or mystical (*ērfāni*) poetry in this language, as in the *divāns*

of Attār, Rumi, Erāqī, Sa‘di, Khājū, and the works of numerous other poets among predecessors or contemporaries of Hafez.

Hafez’s obsessive concern with the themes and terms of Sufi literature, juxtaposed with his continuous harsh criticism of institutionalized Sufism and its representatives, in the name of an individualistic esoteric faith, reveals his very intimate acquaintance with Sufi literature and his enthusiastic engagement with key Sufi concepts, terms, spiritualistic claims, and practices. The constant presence of two central iconic figures—*zāhēd* (the ascetic), on one hand, and *rēnd* (the enlightened libertine) on the other—should be considered as the core discourse of the *Divān*. The bipolar characterization of these two central figures and their eternal contradictory positions on the matters of Truth and righteousness are the dominant themes in the poetry of Hafez, which essentially is adopted from his predecessors among Sufi poets, originally based on the Sufi exegesis of the Qur’anic account of the myth of the Creation.

Regarding the problematics noted above, intertextual approach seems to be the most fruitful method for disclosing the basic contextual meanings of the numerous terms, images, and symbolic expressions, that the *Divān* of Hafez shares basically with the long and prolific tradition of the Persian Sufi literature, both in poetry and prose.

The Basic Implications of the Intertextual Approach

In recent decades, Iranian scholars have extensively explored the intertextual relations between the *Divān* of Hafez and other books of poetry, both Sufi and non-Sufi, composed by his predecessors and contemporaries. These explorations have clearly demonstrated Hafez’s wide reading of Persian literary works and, also, his considerable use of images, expressions, and even verbatim citations, in part or in full, from such works. But these comparative surveys, fundamentally, have been performed from a literary point of view. Therefore, the more fundamental issue, that is, the ideational relations between the basic images, symbols, figurative expressions, and concepts in the *Divān* and other texts of Sufi literature, have not been subject to a meticulous analytical investigation.

The comparative study of the *Divān*¹ and certain classical Sufi Qur’anic hermeneutical works in prose, which precede the *Divān* by several centuries, performed by

¹See Daryoush Ashouri, *‘Erfān o rēndi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1379/ 2000), 68-139.

me, strived to use modern instruments of conceptual analysis in search of a positive intertextual affinity, at least in part, between the *Divān* and those works. This study revealed the undeniable influence, impact, and echoing of those works upon the main thrust of poetic discourse in the *Divān* of Hafez.

The intertextual approach proves to be the most effective method for contextualizing the *Divān* in its proper historical setting and deconstructing its structure of meaning. This method ultimately discloses the genealogy of the complex allusions and key terms adopted from Sufi tradition of poetic tongue in the *Divān*. Set alongside certain studies done by Iranian scholars in recent decades on the abundant reflections of the Qur'anic verses in the *Divān*, some students of the Sufi literature have pointed out the reflections of Sufi Qur'anic hermeneutics in the *Divān*. Two texts are of special note in this regard: *Kashf al-asrār* of Rashid al-Din Meybodi (d. 520/1126), the great pioneering work of Khorasani Sufism, and *Mērsād al-ēbād* of Najm al-Din Rāzi (d. 654/1256), a fundamental Sufi work that appeared later along the same hermeneutical lines. To provide direct evidence of this influence, the section devoted to intertextual study in my book on Hafez cites numerous verses from the *Divān* alongside selected related passages from the two Sufi hermeneutical works mentioned above. This juxtaposition clearly demonstrates how many lines in the *Divān* repeat almost precisely the key terms and metaphors found in those texts, and strongly echo their hermeneutical approach to the Qur'anic myth of Creation. The difference, of course, is that what these Sufi authors describe through a lengthy and detailed prose treatment, Hafez expresses in a uniquely succinct and allusive poetical tongue.

The detailed and extended exposition of those terms and images in Meybodi's work facilitates a clearer understanding of the referential role of many words and expressions obsessively repeated in the *Divān*. For example, we can confidently ascertain the meaning of the term *salāmat*—which is repeated many times in the *Divān*—as expressed in a half line by him:

من سرگشته هم از اهل سلامت بودم . . .

(*Man-e sar-gashtē ham az ahl-ē salāmat būdam . . .*)

I, the wandering one, once belonged to the people of sound life . . .

Here, as in the other places, *salāmat* refers to the 'sound life' in the 'House of Soundness' (Dār al-Salām), Heavenly Abode, the Paradise. Thus, *ahl-ē salāmat*, as a term, refers to the inhabitants of Dār al-Salām. In this verse, the stable, sound,

and delightful life in the 'House of Soundness', devoid of any disturbance, stands in contrast to the life of the narrator—the poet—living an earthly life, characterized as the life of a perplexed, homeless one, a 'wanderer' (*sar-gashtē*).

Through further investigation into the above-mentioned hermeneutical texts, we can realize that Hafez, in this verse as in many others, identifies himself, as 'wanderer', with his archetypal paradigm, Adam, the Father of humankind, after leaving the Paradise. According to Sufi hermeneutics of the Khorasani school, an extensive exposition of which appears in the section devoted to mystical interpretation of the Qur'an in *Kashf al-asrār*, Adam's 'wandering' in the Eternal Time was caused by his positive and courageous response to the invocation of Love while living in Paradise. Then, by committing the Original Sin, he chooses, deliberately, to desert the 'House of Soundness' (*Dār al-Salām*) and, by this action, alienates himself from its sound-living inhabitants (*ahl-ē salāmat*) to commence a life, full of hazards and dangers, in the mundane, terrestrial world (*ālam-ē khākī*), in order to fulfill the will of the Eternal Beloved (*mahbūb-ē azali*). The second half line of this verse reveals that the adventure of deserting the heavenly safe and sound life was caused by a love 'trap' put in his way (*dām-ē rāh*) by the 'curly hair' of the Beloved. In this relationship we read in the *Kashf al-asrār*,

فرمان آمد،: "یا آدم، اکنون که قدم در کوی عشق نهادی از بهشت بیرون شو که این سرای راحت
است و عاشقانِ درد را با سلامتِ دارالسلام چه کار!"²

A heavenly command came, "O Adam, now that you have passed into the quarter of love, get out of the Paradise which is the house of comfort. What the lovers of sufferings have to do with the sound life of the 'House of Soundness'!"

By means of the intertextual study we come to understand the original reason for and meaning of the 'wandering' (*sar-gashtēgi*) of the poet. Another point, which provides strong support to this approach, is the use Hafez makes of the word '*sar-gashtē*' in this context. This word is borrowed from *Mērsād al-ēbād*³, where Rūzi is recounting the story of the Fall of Adam from Paradise, using this attribute to describe his ultimate 'homelessness'. On another occasion, Hafez speaks of '*man-ē sar-gardān*' (me, the wanderer), which is again a term adopted from *Mērsād* (*ibid.*,

²Rashid al-din Meybodi, *Kashf al-asrār va 'oddat al-abrār*, ed. 'A.A. Hekmat (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishers, 1331/1952), I:162.

³Najm al-Din Rūzi, *Mērsād al-ēbād*, ed. M. A. Riyāhi (Tehran: Bongāh-ē tarjomē va nashr-ē ketāb, 1352/1973, repr. 1383/2004), 94.

idem.) in the same context, where Rāzi relates the words that Adam has told to God after the Fall, describing his own situation as ‘*sar-gardāni*’ (wandering).⁴

In fact, this very condition of ‘wandering’ is expounded in great detail in these Sufi hermeneutical works, where the myth of Creation of Adam according to the Qur’an is analyzed in details from a mystical perspective. Throughout his *Divān*, Hafez makes repeated poetic allusions to this specific Sufi hermeneutical version of the story. Likewise, an intertextual study of the *Divān* alongside the mystical interpretation of Qur’anic passages in Meybodi’s work, clearly reveals the precise referential meanings of many other terms and expressions, such as: *karāmat* (god’s graciousness), *malāmat* (blame), *peymān* (pact), *gharib* (stranger), *lotf-ē azal* (pre-eternal grace), *dām-ē balā* (trap of afflictions), *zāhēd-ē khod-bin* (the conceited ascetic), etc. By the same token, the search for intertextual relationships between the *Divān* and the section devoted to the extended mystical interpretation of the myth of Creation in *Mērsād al-ēbād* of Rāzi, allows us to grasp the referential meanings of such terms and expressions as: *ganj* (treasure), *kharābāt* (‘Tavern of Ruin’), *sowme’a* (cloister), *rēndān-ē qalandar* (wild roving libertines), *gowhar-ē makhzan-ē asrār* (the Pearl of the Treasury of Mysteries), and so forth.

⁴By having at hand these intertextual data, we can understand, with much certainty, the meaning of the ‘vagabond heart’ (*dēl-ē harz-ē-gard*) of Hafez, of which he speaks in the following line:

تا دل هرزه‌گرد من رفت به چین زلف او
 زین سفر دراز خود عزم وطن نمی‌کند
 Since my vagabond heart traveled to the
 land of his/her [long] curled hair

Never intends turning back from this
 prolonged journey to its homeland.

By returning to *Kashf al-asrār* (VI:191) we find that ‘the homeland’ (*vatan*), here, is nowhere but the Heavenly Abode from which the Spirit, in the body of Adam, has started its ‘wandering’ or ‘prolonged journey’—as expressed by Hafez—to the Earthly House. By comparative study of the symbolic image of the ‘[long, curly hair]’ (*zolf*) of the Beloved in the *Divān* of Hafez (see Ashouri, 382-86) and other *divāns* of the Sufi love literature, such as *Divān-ē Shams-ē Tabrizi*, we learn that the *zolf*, with its blackness and much twisted curly texture, and its ‘restlessness’ (*āshoftēgi*,

biqarāri) symbolically represents the Earthly World. Unlike Rumi, whose object of love is the heavenly sun-like, or moon-like, ‘face’ (*rūy*) of the Eternal Beloved, Hafez relates us of his falling in passionate love with the *zolf* of the Eternal Beloved already at the first glance on it at the ‘First Day’ (*rūz-e avval / rūz-e nokhošt*) of Creation. He speaks, again and again, emphatically of remaining lovingly faithful to this ‘captivity’ in the ‘curl of the Beloved’s hair’ (*kham-ē zolf-ē yār*), i.e. conditions of the Earthly life, which is, at the same time, ‘trap of afflictions’ (*dām-ē balā*). He accepts the Earthly World as the eternally ordained Human (Adamic) abode destined by Eternal Beloved, in contradistinction to the Heavenly World, the abode of the Angelic creatures. Pondering on this differentiation in the Sufi poetics of mystical love makes it possible to separate an earlier stage of its fostering, represented, highest of all, by Attār and Rumi, from its ultimate stage in the poetry of Hafez (see Ashouri, 304-27; and ‘Conclusion’ in this article).

Even more essential to our quest for the structure of meaning in the *Divān* of Hafez is the strong echo of the central point of the Sufi hermeneutics in the greatest number of his *ghazals*.

The Core of Sufi Hermeneutics

The intertextual study undertaken by this author reveals a very crucial point: the selected parts of the two Sufi hermeneutical works by Meybodi and Rāzi that exhibit the greatest affinity to the terms, images, and expressions in the *Divān* of Hafez, as mentioned above, are directly concerned with a mystical reading and interpretation of the myth of Creation in Qur'an. It is the focal point of all attempts made by Sufi exegetes to reveal the mysteries (*asrār*) of God's Word (*Kalām Allāh*). To this end, they ventured a bold exegesis of those parts of the Qur'an which are mainly narrated briefly, being scattered in seven different suras. The Sufis who pioneered esoteric Qur'anic hermeneutics strongly believed that their adventurous quest for uncovering the secret layers of meanings in God's Word, in reality, are heavenly inspirations. Through their unique and daring approach, the Sufi exegetes found themselves, as it were, being guided to their heartfelt knowledge, induced by God, to the safe harbour of a thoroughly original mystical theology, angelology, and anthropology. By this extraordinary hermeneutical leap of understanding, they could consider themselves as 'God's friends' and 'God-knowing' ones (*owliyā'* and *orafā'*), chosen by God to serve as treasurers of His mysteries (*khāzine-yē asrār-ē ēlāhi*).

In Meybodi's work, which constitutes the first great Persian compilation of Sufi hermeneutics, we witness the author's mission of disclosing the secrets of Adam's creation by revealing his place in the teleological design of the World. To this end, the Sufi exegetes from Khorasan create their specific manner of reading and interpreting God's Word. This strategy patently manifests itself in the very title of the Meybodi's colossal work: *Kashf al-asrār* i.e. the discovery of the mysteries.⁵ Following the legacy and tradition of earlier Sufi masters, Meybodi ventures to follow the three-way relationships between God, the Angels (including, specifically, Eblis), and Adam, as described in the Qur'an in a semi-dramatic style. Meybodi implements this strategy through a meticulous analysis of the words exchanged between the three parties and their behaviours toward each other during the process

⁵A thorough study and analysis of *Qur'an Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn Kashf al-asrār* is recently published. See *Maybudī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics: The*

of the Creation of Adam and subsequent events, that is, the story of the primordial Sin and Fall.

Meybodi, as a compiler of the long tradition of Sufi hermeneutics, garners all the key Qur'anic segments related to the story of man's Creation in the Heavenly World, and juxtaposes these with other relevant verses about the qualifications of man's life in this World. Moreover, to expound upon the terse Qur'anic narrative, he supplies complementary materials drawn from the *hadiths* (Godly and Prophetic traditions), and 'testimonies' (*khabar*), including ideas and interpretations integrated from the Jewish and Christian scriptural hermeneutical traditions. In this manner, he strives to reconstruct the 'full text' of the story of Creation, delving into great detail to disclose its teleological mysteries. Close study of the strategy of Sufi hermeneutics provides essential clues for understanding how Sufi esoteric 'discoveries' (*kashf*) in this context played a crucial role in forming the spirit, subject-matter, and tongue of the later Persian Sufi literature, reflected specifically in its extraordinarily prolific poetical productions.

According to the Sufi hermeneutical analysis, as discussed in the two pivotal works by Meybodi and Rāzi, when God announced His resolve to appoint a successor (*khalifa*) on the Earth, the Angels protested that this, yet unnamed, creature, i.e. the later Adam, would be a corrupt and bloodthirsty being (II:29). The Sufi exegetes tried to discover the Angels' hidden intention in those words by tracing their subsequent words and behaviors.⁶ They concluded that the Angels' disdainful words about Adam, or their hostile attitude toward him, derived from the pride they took in having served God for eons. It also reflected their jealousy for the special attention that God bestowed upon Adam. Hearing God's Words and observing His long labor in shaping Adam's mould of clay by His own hands, the Angels saw the creation of a favored being who, in spite of his low earthly origin, would be far closer to God than them. Hence, they objected against Adam to preserve their superior position as spiritual beings. God's response to their objection, that 'I know the things that you never know,' (II:29) confirmed His secret intentions of creating Adam. Finally, the refusal of Eblis—an angel of the highest rank and knowledge—to prostrate himself before Adam, confirmed the eternal rivalry for closeness to God between Angels, as *heavenly* creatures, and Adam, as the *earthly* being. While the God's act of bestowing Adam from his own Spirit and making him enlightened by suggesting the knowledge of 'all names' in him from the treasury of His own absolute knowledge,

⁶Meybodi, III:570-73; Rāzi, 65-97.

puts great questions before the exegetes about the three partite relationships between God, Man, and the Angels.

The long quest of Sufi hermeneutics to penetrate the mysteries of the Creation of Adam through God's Word, by centuries of elaborations, finally culminates in the belief in Adam's moral and spiritual superiority to Angels; in spite of the apparent spatial closeness of the Angels to God in the Heavenly world and Adam's Fall from grace reside in proximity of the Angels and God himself. Through their specific manner of interpretation, they arrived at this essential insight by contemplations on the real, but secretive, closeness of Adam to God. They finally find out Adam as the creature chosen by God for the role of the protagonist in the romantic epic of the Eternal Love story. This thesis found its justification in their meticulous analysis of the Myth of Fall (*hobūt*) of man.

Adam's Fall and his punitive exile from Paradise to the inferior Earthly realm for disobeying God's orders, is interpreted as a momentous secret plot willed by Him, in which the Angels came to participate unwittingly, unaware of the mysterious divine intent behind it. Indeed, the Creation of Adam remains an eternal mystery to the Angels because they are ontologically inferior to Adam by being deprived of Adam's share in God's Spirit and Knowledge. Therefore, Adam's primordial sin, which led to the Fall, is interpreted as God's disguised Eternal blessing (*lotf-ē azal*) for mankind, as Hafez reminds. This epochal event was fully pre-ordained as part of God's pre-eternal resolve (*mashiyat*) for revealing the highest stage of all being: His Beauty. Thus, when coming to Adam and his ontological mission, we read in *Kashf al-asrār* such words of exultation:

که داند سرّ فطرتِ آدم! که شناسد دولت و رُتبتِ آدم! عقابِ هیچ خاطر بر شاخِ درختِ دولتِ آدم
نه نشست!
دیده‌ی هیچ بصیرتِ جمالِ خورشید-صفوتِ آدم درنیافت!^۷

Who could know the mystery of Adam's nature! Who could recognize the loftiness of the fortune and status of Adam! The eagle of no mind soared so high to sit on the branch of the tree of Adam's fortune! The eyes of no insightfulness perceived the sun-like feature of Adam!

The fundamental reversal of meaning of the Fall in Sufi hermeneutics discloses Adam's secret ontological mission. Then, in Sufi hermeneutics and Persian poetics

⁷Meybodi, III, 297-98.

of the mystical love, Fall (*hobūt*) finds an interpretive translation as *safar*, journey, of Adam, and, in this way, gaining an entirely positive connotation. According to the Sufi exegesis, Adam voluntarily renounces the safe life of Paradise and embraces the hazardous earthly life only to fulfill God's eternal Will. In contrast, the Angels, remain God's absolutely obedient servants in the Kingdom of Heaven, and know Him only in His fearful, wrathful features that indicate His attributes of majestic authority (named as *al-jabbār* and *al-qahhār*: the Compeller, the Dominator).⁸ As such, only the frightening despotic features of God is manifest to Angels, described, by His own Words, in His Names of Majesty.

But, these features are not the perfect manifestations of His Names. There are attributes of compassion and mercy for Him that their manifestation demands the existence of a rebellious, sinful creature begging His mercy. This creature is none other than Adam who, through his humble, earthly, and sinful nature, realizes and underscores the superior divine attributes of beauty and compassion. Thus, in this context, we can see clearly how Hafez could proudly identify himself with Adam in the 'journey' destined for the joyful 'captivity' in the love affairs originally willed by the Eternal Beloved.

من آدمِ بهشتی ام اما در این سفر
حالی اسیرِ عشقِ جوانانِ مهوش ام.

I am the Adam, man of Paradise
But, now, in this journey,
Fallen captive to the love of the lovely young creatures.

In unraveling the secret core of Adam's creation, Persian Sufi hermeneutics discovered the greatest and most precious jewel of knowledge within this narrative, namely, the eternal love relationship between God and Man from the very First Day of Creation (*rūz-ē awwal*, *rūz-ē alast*). The Angels, in spite of their spatial proximity to God, are denied Adam's favored ontological position, elevated by God's intimate love for Mankind. The resounding echo of the Eternal love story could be heard throughout the whole Sufi poetics of mystical love in Persian and most persistently in the *Divān* of Hafez.

In summary, the core of Sufi hermeneutics consists of the transmutation of the Myth of Fall into the epic of the Odyssey of Adam. He leaves Paradise with a heroic adventurous spirit for carrying the 'burden of God's trust' (*bār-ē amānat*). The

⁸Meybodi, III, 571.

Odyssey of Adam in *Kashfal-asrār* and *Mērsād al-ēbād* are narrated in fine masterly written examples of Persian prose, in its primary stage of development, that blends epic and poetic elements decorated by colorful couplets of love poetry. This tongue echoes the already fostered highly rhetorical and boastful discourse of Khorasani ode-composition (*qasidē-sarā'i*) and colossal epic work of Ferdowsi, employed in the service of the Sufi discourse. The stylistic, highly refined literary tongue of the pioneering Persian speaking Sufis of Khorasan, like Bāyazid, abu Sa'id, and Ansāri, culminates in the colossal work of Meybodi.

The poetic prose of these early Sufi sayings and works must be considered as literary antecedents of the later eruption of the Sufi poetical literature from 6th/12th century. In the time line of Persian mystical works, one can follow the trail of these early works to the mature writings of such Sufi poets as Attār, Erāqi, Rumi, Sa'di, and Khājū.

Two Archetypal Models: Adam/Hafez versus Angel/Ascetic

The story of the Angels' disapproval of Adam's creation and their subsequent rivalry with him, especially the momentous hostile role played by Satan in the story of Adam's primordial Sin and ultimate Fall, reveals two pre-eternal oppositional figures whose contrasting behaviors are pre-ordained. On the one hand, there is the archetype of the *zāhēd* (ascetic), represented by the thoroughly innocent life of the Angels who spend, according to Qur'an, eternally, 'days and nights', in constant prayer to their Lord. On the other hand, there is the archetypal model of the *rēnd*⁹ (libertine), represented by Adam, characterized by his innate propensity to revolt against God and breaching his Lord's Primordial 'Pact' (*peymān*)¹⁰ which forbade his access to the famous tree (Qur'an II:35). According to narratives cited in Sufi hermeneutics, Eblis himself had a record of seven hundred thousand years of prayer

⁹*Rēnd*, as a disapproved attributive noun, originally used for the people who disregarded moral and religious laws, committed all kinds of sinful deeds, such as drinking alcohol, gambling, and visiting the defamed quarters of the town (*kharābāt*), the site of taverns and brothels. As collective name (*rēndān*), many times was used for groups of urban ruffians. Sufis adopted this word, alongside a group of others, like *kharābāt*, *maykadē* (tavern) or *mēykhānē*, and used them with metaphoric and symbolic meanings. It happened when the Persian Sufi hermeneutics, by its own way of reading the myth of Creation in Qur'an, discovered the

two archetypes of *zohd* (asceticism) and *rēndi* (libertinism), represented, respectively, by Angels, as eternally innocent, and Adam, as the first human being and father of all humanity, who has committed the Original Sin. The attributive noun *rēnd* and its substantive form, *rēndi* is used almost by all Sufi poets (Attār, Rumi, Erāqi, S'adi, and others) with real or mystical and symbolic connotations. But, it was Hafez who set it with extolment, as the highest spiritual position for a human being, as pivotal concept in his anti-ascetic poetics of *rēndi*.

¹⁰On the term 'pact' (*peymān*), between God and Adam, see Meybodi, I:161.

prayer and devotion to God. But the pride and arrogance stemming from that very piety, led to his disobedience before Gods order to all Angels to prostrate before newly created Adam, and ultimate banishment of him. This arrogance contrasts with Adam’s humility, his confession of guilt, and his plea for forgiveness, which endeared him to God. Thus, Hafez says:

از آن ماست بهشت، ای خدائشناس، برو!
که مستحقِ کرامتِ گناه‌کاران اند.

Ours is Paradise, away with you, Godly one!
For it is the guilty who deserve forgiveness.

Hafez’s mockery of the ascetic life and his disdain of *zāhēd* and *zohd* (asceticism), alongside the glorification of the *rēnd* and *rēndi* appears extensively in Persian Sufi love literature from sixth/twelfth century onwards. This position relates to the dual and contrasting archetypes of ‘earthly Adam’ (*ādam-ē khāki*) and the Angels. The former is destined to live in the ‘House of the Magi’ (*sarā-yē moghān*) in consort with other disreputable outcasts (*rēndān*), like himself, while the latter reside as ascetics in the ‘Cloister of the Holy World’ (*sowmē’a-yē ālam-ē qods*). Therefore, by identifying himself with his Eternal archetypal model, Adam, and proclaiming himself as his faithful descendant, proudly sharing his Eternal destiny of ‘sinfulness’ and ‘fall’, Hafez confirms his human way of life, depicted as *rēndi* (libertinism), is his pre-eternal destiny:

مرا روزِ ازل کاری بجز رندی نفرمودند
هر آن قسمت که آن جا رفت از آن افزون نخواهد شد

From the Pre-eternal day I was ordained to live but a libertine life
Nothing will be added to what was destined there

In the following verse, where Hafez clearly indicates Adam’s paternal status to him, and his relinquishment of the ‘recluse of asceticism’, and, therefore, deserting Paradise, as his eternally destined inheritance to live by.

نه من از خلوتِ تقوا بدر افتادم و بس
پدرام نیز بهشتِ ابد از دست بهشت

Not only I deserted the recluse of asceticism,
My Father, too, forswore the Eternal Paradise!

Thus, the Sufi hermeneutics by setting up a binary opposition between the two groups, ascribe such negative attributes as arrogance, hypocrisy, conceit, and piety-for-show to the so-called ‘heavenly’ ascetics. Curiously, these negative attributes

are also present among the *zāhēdān*, the earthly counterparts of the heavenly ascetics. In contrast, Adam, who represents the archetype of the guiltiness through his libertinism (*rēndi*), is characterized with the loftiest and most humane attributes, such as chivalry, universal kindness to all living beings, humility, righteousness, sincerity, and inner godliness, in spite of the apparent primordial breach of God's prohibition. In this way, *zāhēd* versus *rēnd*, and their almost total opposition, in the *ghazals* of ecstatic Sufi literature, becomes main theme in the poetics of mystical love in Persian language and occupies the center of its discourse.

A Crucial Semantic Metamorphosis

In the Qur'an, Angels are described as guardians of the divine Throne ('*arsh*) and ordained as strict overseers of the behavior and uttering of human beings (Qur'an, L,¹⁸; LXXXII: 10-11). The key term here is *raqib*, which originally means overseer, used several times for God Himself in Qur'an (IV:1; V:117; XI:93; XXXIII:52). But, in Persian language, under the influence of Sufi hermeneutics of Khorasani origin, the meaning of this borrowed term gradually underwent a crucial transformation. Tracing of this transformation provides an essential clue for a deeper understanding of the archetypal dichotomy in the Sufi hermeneutics, which entails the ontological bipolarity of Adam/Angels, and Eblis, the so-called strongest 'claimant' (*modda'i*) among the Angels.

In Arabic, *raqib* has kept its meanings of watcher, guardian, and warden from its original Qur'anic usage to this day. In the early Islamic centuries, the Persian language borrowed this term which was used in its original sense by poets like Rūdaki, Nēzāmi, Khāqāni, and, even later, Sa'di. But from 6th/12th century onward, its meaning in Persian Sufi literature tended to transform to that of the 'rival' in a love affair. From the poetry of Attār, Erāqi, Owad al-Din Marāgha'i to Hafez and the later poets, we can follow and document the metamorphosis of the meaning of the *raqib* to rival. From early times to the time of Hafez, it gradually connoted the double meanings of watcher/rival in its allusive poetic usage. In later times, the meaning of rival in a love affair came to be dominant to the point of total disappearance of the original meaning in the Persian language. It was used many times interchangeably, with other pejorative appellations like *modda'i*, insincere claimant, *zāhēd*, the ascetic, often insincere, *khasm*, the enemy who is by its very nature filled with jealousy (*hasad*).¹¹

¹¹Innumerable lines of poems in the *divāns* of the Sufi poets, before and after Hafez, attest to this point: *Raqib* as a couple of angels sitting on the left and right shoulders of every human being, assigned to record all their good and evil deeds:

خدای عرش مدام از فرشتگان دو رقیب
 به نزد بنده نشانده است بر شمال و یمن (امیر معزی)
 رقیب دست چپ را مانده شد دست
 ز بس کردار تو بنوشت پیوست

One can follow the abundant use of those emblematic words in the works of the Sufi poets from the early times of the fostering of the Sufi poetic tongue. Then, from the time of Hafez, *raqib*, and its infinitive, *rēqābat*, gradually have got no other meaning in Persian language than rival and rivalry, or competitor and competition, used as such in the context of love affairs, sport events, commercial affairs, and the like.

This amazing semantic transformation cannot be explained without affirmative reference to Sufi hermeneutics. It conveys, through this hermeneutics, that the Angels were down-graded from their original superior position of overseers and 'restrict watchers'¹², as told in Qur'an, to the semi-equal position of 'rivals' of Adam, and his descendants, in their mutual love for God, and their competitive

رقیب دست راست آزاد از تو
قلم بر کاغذی نهاد از نو (عطار)

Raqib as devil (Ahrēman; the ancient Persian name for Eblis):

رقیب کی ستا که در ماجرای خلوت ما
فرشته ره نبرد، تا به اهرمن چه رسد! (سعدی)

Raqib as rival in the love affair:

همه شب نهاد ام سر چو سگان بر آستانت
که رقیب در نباید به بهانه‌ی گدایی (عراقی)

روا مدار، خدایا، که در حریم وصال
رقیب محرم و حرمان نصیب من باشد (حافظ)

با تو بینم رقیب و من گذران
دیده بر هم نهاده، دل نگران (محتشم کاشانی)

Raqib as guardian, gatekeeper:

جان وصل تو بی رقیب جوید
دل روی تو بی نقاب خواهد (خواجو)

رقیبان غافل و ما را از آن چشم و جبین هر دم
هزاران گونه پیغام است و حاجب در میان ابرو (حافظ)

Raqib as faultfinder:

از طعن‌های رقیب نگرده عیار من
چون زر اگر برند مرا در دهان گاز (حافظ)

Raqib as the jealous one:

بکش جفای رقیبان مدام و جور حسود
که سهل باشد اگر یار مهربان داری (حافظ)

Modda'i (insincere claimant) as rival in a love affair:

مدعی را اگر آواره نسازم ز دَرش
از سگان سر آن گوی حسابام نکنید (محتشم کاشانی)

مدعی از رشک، بر در، چون نمرود امشب؟- که بود
بزم دلکش، باده بی‌غش، یار سرخوش، من خراب! (محتشم کاشانی)

شب‌ها به بزم مدعی، ای بی‌مروت، جا مکن
آرام جان او مشو، آزار جان ما مکن! (فروغی بسطامی)

Modda'i as *zāhēd* (ascetic [of the heavenly world; allusion to Eblis himself])

ای مدعی زاهد، غزه به طاعت خود
گر سر عشق خواهی، دعوی ز سر بدر کن (عطار)

باده بی‌اور، که هیچ توبه نخواهند کرد
مدعی از زهد خشک، اوحدی از شعر تر (اوحدی مراغهای)

مدعی بی‌خبر از عالم معنی ست، از آن
در سر از حجت خشک این همه دعوی دارد (عمادالدین نسیمی)

Modda'i as faultfinder = *raqib* as faultfinder

با مدعی بگوی که، ای بی‌بصر، مکن
عیب نظر، که دیده نبیند نظیر او! (اوحدی مراغهای)

ساقی بیار باده و با مدعی بگوی
انکار ما مکن، که چنین جام جم نداشت (حافظ)

Modda'i, as the jealous one:

بَرش ادا نکنم مدعی خود هرگز
که مدعی ز حسد بد-ادایی نکند (محتشم کاشانی)

Zāhēd as Devil (or Eblis)

زاهد از رندی حافظ نکند فهم، چه باک
دیو بگریزد از آن قوم که قرآن خوانند

Alongside the interchangeable usage of *raqib*, *modda'i*, *zāhēd*, *hasūd*, essentially as allusions to *Eblis*, other appellations like *doshman*, *khasm*, *ādū* (all meaning 'enemy') in the *Divān* of Hafez and other Sufi love poetry, refer to him too.

¹²The term of *raqibān-ē tond-khū* as used by Hafez, most probably has reference to the *raqibon 'atīd* in Qur'an (L 18).

striving to keep close to Him. Sufi hermeneutics viewed this ‘rivalry’ as having originated at the very moment when God proclaimed his resolve to create Adam as his ‘successor’ (*khalifa*) on the Earth. Therefore, *raqib* in the context of the Persian poetics of mystical love refers to the Angels collectively in its plural form (*raqibān*), and in its singular form primarily to Eblis, who, as the resolute enemy of Adam and his progenies, by means of treacherous plots, out of jealousy, tries to block the access of the Lover to his Eternal Beloved.

The Great Pioneer of the Sufi Hermeneutics

We have mentioned how the refined poetic taste and epic tone of Sufi hermeneutics, as seen in *Kashf al-asrār* and *Mērsād al-ēbād*, is the product of a cumulative process spanning centuries. One can trace it back, through citations of *Kashf al-asrār*, to the first great Persian-speaking Sufi of Khorasan, Bāyazīd of Bastām (3rd/9th century). Bāyazīd pioneered the use of the aphoristic, poetic-epic tone mixed for expressing his mystical paradoxes of longing and love. But Shaykh Abū Sa‘id ēbn-ē Abēl-Khayr (357-440/967—1048) must be considered as the decisive turning point in the development of mystical love in the Persian language, primarily appearing in Khorasan. We can consider him as the certain forerunner and founding father of the new style of Qur’anic reading and interpretation that vastly manifested itself in later Sufi literature.

Abū Sa‘id was a revolutionary figure in the arena of the already widespread Sufi culture in Khorasan. His radical contribution was to change the extremely phobic attitude inherited from his Sufi predecessors and prevalent among his notable contemporaries, such as Abol-Hasan Kharaqāni and Abol-Qāsēm al-Qoshayri (d. 465/1074). The Sufis of earlier times, struck by the horror-inducing tone of the ‘verses of agony’ (*āyāt-ē adhāb*) that suffuse the greatest part of the Qur’an, often seemed haunted by an obsessive fear of God’s omnipresence and His wrathful scrutiny of human misdeeds and sinful thoughts. This attitude is clearly described in their hagiographical and didactic works about the lives of many great Sufi figures of the earlier times. However, with his highly original way of reading Qur’an, Abū Sa‘id replaced this deeply traumatized and depressed attitude with a cheerful and jubilant spirit, seeing nothing in God’s attitude toward Man, and moreover to all living beings, but compassion and gracefulness.

Abū Sa‘id’s new revolutionary hermeneutics of God’s Word can be considered a great historical turning point in the Sufi culture of Khorasan. Reports of his life,

recounted mainly by his grandchildren, tell us that he had experienced the rigours and exercises of asceticism in the extreme for decades. To purify his soul, he forsook the worldly life and lived in seclusion for many years. Eventually, however, he renounced asceticism and settled for a simple but joyful life among ordinary people. Abū Sa‘id was heroic, both in practicing asceticism and in renouncing it. He was pivotal in establishing the *khānēqāh* as a center for social life based on benevolent humanitarian principles. He breathed poetic life into the Sufi vernacular by reciting poems on every occasion, especially in his public preaching. He also introduced the practice of listening to music (*samā’*) and dancing in the dervishes’ house (*khānēqāh*). Much of this behavior stood in stark contrast to the religious dogmatism of contemporary Sufis, whose wrath he incurred from time to time. By his original and courageous way of reading the Qur’an, the spirit of religious toleration, chivalry, graciousness, and humanitarianism took roots in Khorasani Sufism, breaking the conventional frameworks of ascetic, austere, and dogmatic attachment to sharia.¹³

Abū Sa‘id’s grandson and biographer, Ebn-ē Monavvar, relates that the master had destroyed his own writings. But the oral transmission of his memorable deeds and sayings, and their final recording after three generations, attests to his eminent posthumous reputation. His style of reading and interpreting the Qur’an seems had great influence on his disciples and was passed down to later generations as esoteric knowledge among Sufi circles for decades. In this way his hermeneutical tradition must have appeared broadly in Meybodi’s work, apparently mediated by Khāja Abdollāh Ansāri (396-1006/1006-1088).

An essential thought-provoking point about Abū Sa‘id’s style of reading the Qur’ān is his selective approach to the verses. This is related in *Asrār al-towhid*, the hagiographical account of his life by Ebn-ē Monavvar. He recounts that Sheikh in his final years, when reading the Qur’an, recited only the ‘verses of compassion’ (*āyāt-e rahmat*) and ignored the ‘verses of agony’. When somebody criticized him that this way of reading distorts the order of Qur’anic verses, he replied: ‘What is related to us all are the verses of good tidings and absolution. The verses of agony belong to the others?’¹⁴ This arbitrary bold way of reading the Qur’an must have had

¹³See Terry Graham, ‘Abū Sa‘id ibn Abī’l-Khayr and the School of Khurāsān,’ in *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 2, *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld 1999), 83-136.

¹⁴Mohammad ēbn-ē Monavvar, *Asrār al-towhid fi maqāmāt-ē al-Sheikh Abi Sa‘id*, ed. M.R. Shafi’i Kadkani (Tehran: Āgāh Publishers, 1366/1986).

great appeal to the Sufis. Because it corroborates their self-conception as real friends (*owliyā'*) of God, whom He loves as His chosen people among all creatures.

A Basic Dichotomy in Sufi Hermeneutics

It seems that there has been a fundamental misunderstanding prevalent amongst modern students of the Sufi culture which stems from the conception of viewing the entire intellectual tradition of Islamic mysticism as a version of Neo-Platonism. Even such great pioneering scholars like R. A. Nicholson and Henry Corbin, in all their research, seem to have been directed by this conception.

Until recent times, the structure of the meaning and world view of the pivotal works of Sufi hermeneutics from Khorasan remained unexplored from a theoretical perspective. Perhaps the literary approach of these texts to theology and the strong presence of the poetic and emotive spirit, expressed in an allusive, symbolic language, did not submit itself easily to conceptual classification and analysis. However, the great Khorasani Sufis, and their counterparts in the other parts of the Persian speaking world, openly declared their anti-philosophical attitudes by rejecting and even despising the Greek way of thought. Thus, a meticulous examination of the Sufi hermeneutical works penned in Khorasan reveals their total renunciation from Greek philosophy. The Sufi poets and prose stylists of that line of thought and literary style often stress their revulsion for any rationalistic, argumentative approach to religious and theological matters. They disparaged the bewilderment in the uncertain realm of the human reason and renounced, in Rumi's words, walking with the 'wooden feet of the argumentative people'.¹⁵ In contrast, they have always extolled extravagant spirituality and absolute submission to the God's Will and His esoteric guidance. Their way of getting knowledge is immersion in inspirational moods of the moment (*ahwāl*), which is conferred upon them from the Occult World (*ālam-ē ghēyb*). They recommend moving in the daylight of inspirations received through the center of affections, the heart (*qalb*), along the path of 'mania' (*jonūn*), spiritual drunkenness, ecstasies of experiencing love relationship with the Eternal Beloved, towards the final goal of the annihilation of one's self in God.

The fundamental irrationalism of this line of Sufism expressed in poetical tongue, either in poetic or prose form, their enthusiastic disdain for Reason and glorification of madness, that we repeatedly encounter in their *divāns*, refers back to their hermeneutics of the myth of

¹⁵Jalālu'ddin Mowlavi, *Mathnawi*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (Tehran: Hermes Edition, 1382/1993), 1:97.

Creation and the dichotomous positions of its two main archetypal figures, Angels versus Adam. According to their hermeneutics of the myth of Creation, by listening to the invocation of Love and deserting the sound life of Paradise, Adam also deserted the cautious ways recommended by Reason and dauntlessly submitted himself to the demands of Love. By following the way of 'madness' through acceptance of all dangers arising from submission to the unconditional demands of Love, Adam, as archetypal model, stands in contrast to Angels who symbolize Reason and reasoning in Sufi poetics.¹⁶ The clash between Reason and Love as two sources of attraction for man is a recurrent theme in their literature.

Certainly, there is a serious tension inside the Sufi world of thought between a highly sensational poetical manner of thought and a stream of theosophical thought producing, in its own style, argumentative mystical theology. The former developed mainly in Persian language in earlier centuries, while the latter was mainly expounded in the Arabic in later times. In spite of the blending of these two traditions thereafter, and dominance of the philosophical style theosophy, in general, it is possible to distinguish, by certain criteria, the Sufi theology of pure poetic tongue and outlook from theoretically influenced by, or based on, Neo-Platonic metaphysics formulated mainly by Ibn Arabi and Sohrawardi.

Their oppositional conceptions of Time seems to be a clue for identification of these two trends. In Greek metaphysics, founded by Plato and Aristotle, the fundamental objects of philosophical investigation are non-temporal ideational or essential realities as eternal foundations of the temporal, ephemeral things of the sensible world. In the Platonic and Neo-Platonic account, the latter are viewed only as shadows of the eternal realities. God, in this conception, is the mute, unmoving source of the emanation of the Platonic ideas or Aristotelian essences. He exists in His transcendental seclusion eternally beyond the sensible world. But, in the poetic Sufi view of the world, the universe is created anew in every instant by an absolute power and free will that is not subject to any restrictions. This dynamic, omnipresent, omnipotent, articulate God is the Creator of infinite things out of nothingness in the uninterrupted sequence of time, and in the position of the 'living' (*hayy*) Being accompanies them as permanent observer and guide. The metaphysical realities, as propounded by Greek metaphysics, are comprehended

¹⁶As Hafez says in his famous *ghazal* (ed. Khānlari, n. 148) that explains metaphorically the fundamental conflict among the Reason and Love:

عقل می خواست کران شعله چراغ افروزد
دست غیب آمد و بر سینه‌ی نامحرم زد

The Reason [in the Eternity] wanted to kindle its lantern from that flame [of love]
But, the Unseen Hand [of God] came and pushed out the stranger.

by the faculty of reason in man, while senses and emotions have no part in the act of cognition of the transcendental realities. Their cognitive role is limited to the accidental world of the temporary sensible things. But in the poetic strand of Sufi theology, it is the emotional, sensitive nature of man that plays the greatest part in his relationship with God.

The theosophy of the Sohrawardi and Ibn Arabi, with their Neo-Platonic frameworks, represent the metaphysical approach. They investigate timeless divine realities that govern the world and its history, and attempt to describe these realities theoretically. Their highly discursive efforts constitute a kind of mystical philosophy, which combines a rational, discursive, more or less systematic way of reading the Qur'an with the esoteric findings of the so-called mystical 'discoveries'. In contrast, the Sufis with poetic inclinations, following a tradition developed in Khorasan and Fars, insist on the importance of *vaqt* (heavenly endowed moment), or even *naqd-ē vaqt* (the 'cash' of the moment), and *hāl* (mood, temperament) which is allotted constantly by God Himself, not only to human beings, but to all creatures. In the experience of the 'importations of the moods' (*vārēdāt-ē ahwāl*) which are temporal and, therefore, temporary, reason and its volitional activity has no part. Indeed, the reason, or calculating faculty for self-preservation in man, is viewed as a disturbance that stands in the way of immediate bold experience of the presence of God. This experience is possible only by absolute submission to His Will through opening one's heart and its receptiveness to what is sent by Him every moment.

In Persian, *hāl* also means the present time, allowing the superposition of both connotations of mood and moment in the colloquial and literary usages of the word. For the Sufi, *ahwāl* (moods) have different, even contradictory, modalities, from sorrow and depression (*qabz*) to happiness and euphoria (*bast*), to states of boundless ecstasy. Moods are not permanent. Sufis of this inclination called themselves *ahl-ē hāl*, or people of mood/moment. The term *hāl*, with both overlapping mood/moment connotations, remains in common usage in colloquial Persian. The submissiveness of the *ahl-ē hāl* to their destined mood/moment is thoroughly compatible to the poetic way of life and its manner of expression. Sufis given to the mood/momentary way of experiential, not theoretical, personal relationship with God, instinctively approached the poetical form of expression and developed in an extraordinary manner their own specific tongue in this domain for expressing their esoteric emotional experiences or mood/moments. Therefore, the original poets among Sufis were generally averse to the discursive language and systematic arguments about their creed.

The essential difference among the two groups is best reflected in their approach to language. The discursive type expresses its own ideas in detailed, semi-systematic, cold, prosaic manner, while the other expresses itself in the succinct, allusive, metaphoric, and emotive tongue of poetry. The *ghazals* of Sanāi, Attār, Rumi, Erāqi, Sa'di, and Hafez reflect perfectly these characteristics. The original Sufi poets typically preferred telling tales and fables in the poetic frame of *mathnavi* for expressing their religious and moralistic ideas instead of using the dry tongue of formal arguments.

In later periods, we observe the emergence of a different kind of Sufi poetry (essentially of *khānēqāh-i* type) that uses the metaphoric and symbolic language of this genre of poetry as clichés at the service of the conceptual Sufi theosophy. This kind of 'poems' are generally uninspired mass productions devoid of the sparkle of true poetic creation and its mood/moment. This pseudo-poetic literary productions appeared under the gradual dissemination and final supremacy of theosophical Sufism (*erfān-ē nazari*) in the later history of Sufi culture in the Persianate world.

Theosophical Sufism made instrumental use of the already developed poetic mystical tongue. It adopted the poetics of *rēndi* by fixing dry, rigid, and ascetic 'real meanings' for its metaphoric, symbolic terms. As a result, all its erotic and sensual symbolic terms and expressions were reduced to a standard, monotonous, conceptual lexicon, with the intent of washing out all their seemingly immoral, irreligious, or carnal connotations.¹⁷

However, the influence of the theosophical Sufism was limited to the circles of the *ahl-ē hēkmat* (men of wisdom, philosophers and knowledgeable pious Sufis), while the poetics of *rēndi*, especially through the vast popularity of the poetic tongue of Sa'di and Hafez, had a much greater share in shaping the mentality and literary tastes of the educated and refined people in the Persianate world. The pleasure of poetry, mainly the poetry of love with a taste of *rēndi*, has taken hold over many centuries far beyond the literate world to pervade public culture, even among the illiterate people in remote reaches of the Persian-speaking world.¹⁸

¹⁷The endeavors of Sheikh Mahmūd Shabastari, the author of *Golshan-e rāz*, in this direction has been greatly influential. See, also, as a very expressive example, Bahā' al-Din Khorram-shāhi, ed., *Tafsir-ē erfān-ye Divān-ē Hafez*.

¹⁸The depth and extendedness of the influence of the poetical Sufism, especially the poetics of *rēndi*, into the general culture of the Persian speaking people could be measured by the strong influence of their vocabulary into the vernacular

of the ordinary people. The prevalence of *hāl* in common daily usage and its numerous phrasal verbs and compound forms in the vernacular and literary Persian is a meaningful example, such as: *hāl kardan* (to enjoy, to be pleased of), *hāl dādan* (to give pleasure), *hāl gereftan* (to displease), *dar hāl būdan* (to be in a pleasant mood), *hāl rā daryāftan* (to enjoy one's moment), *az hāl raftan* (to faint), *bē hāl āmadan* (to be refreshed), *hāl āvardan* (to

Conclusion

We have stressed how the intertextual study provides a solid basis for understanding the underlying discourse of the Sufi poetics of mystical love in Persian. A close look at the historical dynamics of Sufi hermeneutics reveals its crucial turning points. We examined the distinct ruptures between the early ascetic readings of the Qur'an and its subsequent mystical-ecstatic readings, especially as developed in Khorasan. The latter reading was based on the discovery of the pre-eternal mutual love relationship between the Creator and human creatures which already began on the 'Day of Covenant' (*rūz-e alast*). It caused a radical transformation in the earlier conception of this relationship which was predicated on the absolute divine authority, on the one hand, and absolutely servile, fearful obedience of man, on the other hand.

The Sufi discourse of love finally spread from Khorasan to other parts of the Persian-speaking world, like Fars, Kerman, and, finally, to the greater Persianate world. In Shiraz, this blossomed in the love poetry of Sa'di, where we observe a deeper exploration of *rēndi* and its implications for human life. In this context, *rēndi*, most probably under the influence of the Christian theology, was viewed as essential sinfulness inherited by mankind from their Eternal Parents, Adam and Eve. However, this momentous heritage later was embraced ecstatically as the pre-defined and primordial fate of man on earth.¹⁹ Indeed, *rēndi* develops into an Eternal model for human nature which defines his teleological place in 'two worlds'. It stands in contrast to the *zohd* (asceticism), characteristic of Angels who are destined for eternal innocence and constant prayer to God.

Other novel developments in the poetics of love mysticism are noteworthy. In earlier stages of the Sufi poetics, developed in Khorasan, Sufi and *ārēf* (man of deep esoteric knowledge and mystical experience) were considered identical, but in the last stage, which marks the culmination of *rēndi* poetics, developed properly in Shiraz by Sa'di and Hafez, Sufi and *zāhēd* (the ascetic) are usually identified and posited as unlearned arrogant hypocrites in contrast to *ārēf*,²⁰ the real enlightened

make fresh), *bā-hāl* (lively, pleasant), *bi-hāl* (faint, unpleasant), *khosh-hāl* (happy), *bad-hāl* (sick, in bad mood), etc. The more literary form of the *hāl*, that is, *hālat*, is extensively used in the Persian poetic literature.

¹⁹Ashouri, 193-202.

²⁰The scornful identification of the Sufi with *zāhēd*, in contrast to the praiseworthy 'ārēf,

occurs many times in the *Divāns* of Sa'di and Hafez. Sa'di says, for example:

زاهد و عابد و صوفی همه طفلان ره اند
مرد اگر هست بجز عارف ربانی نیست

The ascetic, the devout man, the Sufi, all are nothing but children in the [spiritual] path
There is no man in this way except the Godly Gnostic

connoisseur of God and godliness. Sa'di is the pioneering figure of this stage, followed by Khājū and Hafez in subsequent generations. Sufi in this context alludes to the followers of the formal ascetic doctrines and institutionalized Sufism centered in dervishes' houses (*khānēqāhs*). Hereafter, Sufi refers to the people who are still attached to the old ways of extreme piety and asceticism by rejecting, out of their very ignorance, the pleasures of earthly life in pursuit of illusory eternal enjoyments in Paradise. In opposition to the Sufi way of life, we have *ārēf*, the bold man of gnosis with pronounced individuality and piercing knowledge of God's infinite grace to human beings and all living world. Therefore, unlike the Sufi or *zāhēd*, the *ārēf* chooses to partake of earthly pleasures and manifestations of beauty as blessings emanating from the inexhaustible bounty of God showered upon His humble but favored creatures, as a sign of His unbounded graciousness. Such a gnostic, as Sa'di expressly pronounces, and Hafez after him, never deprives himself of the 'cash' of paradise (*behesht-ē naqd*) in the here-and-now in exchange for 'childish' desire after the heavenly one which already had been abandoned voluntarily by our 'Father' in pre-eternity.

چو طفلان تا کی، ای زاهد، فریبی
به سیبِ بوستان و شهد و شیرام

O Ascetic! How long will you so deceiving me, like children,
With the apple of the Garden and [streams of] honey and milk!

من که امروزام بهشتِ نقد حاصل می‌شود
وعده‌ی فردایِ زاهد را چرا باور کنم؟

With the 'cash' paradise within my reach Today,
Why should I believe the ascetic's promise for Tomorrow (i.e. afterworld)

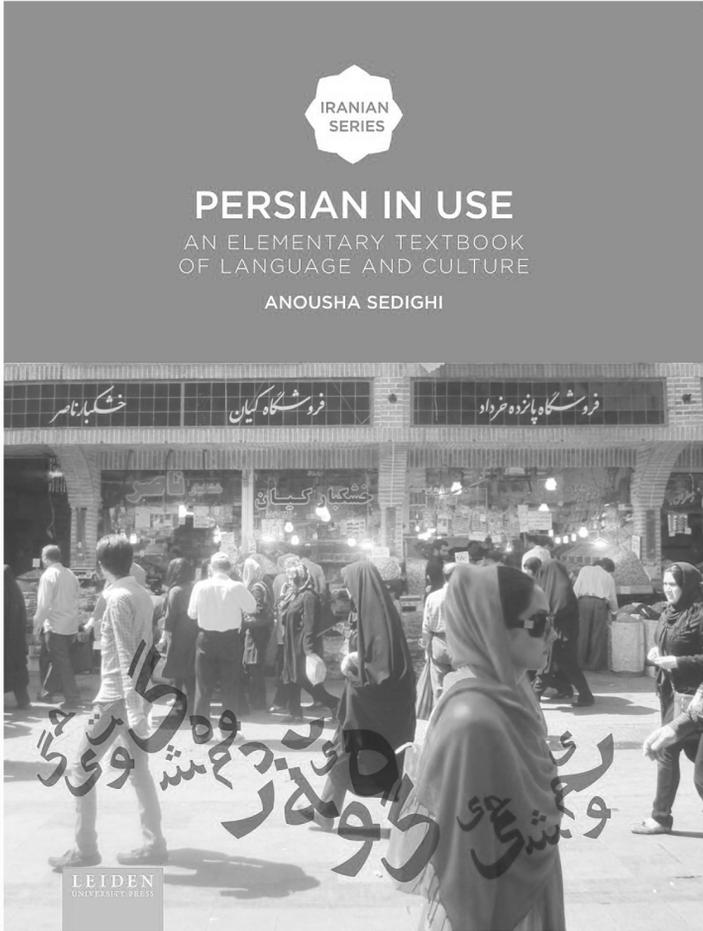
The strong and vibrant tongue of Meybodi in narrating and interpreting stories related to the Creation of Adam, which is the continuation and promotion of the poetic and aphoristic sayings of the great Sufis of Khorasan, can be considered as the most influential primary source for the great jubilation witnessed in later Persian Sufi literature. This tongue embedded the poetics of mystical love at the heart of Persian literature, and caused the later flowering of Persian as a highly refined literary language especially fostered for mystical (*ērfāni*) expressions. Going beyond Iran proper, this tongue and its literature spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, and many other lands, including realms of Ottoman Empire in Anatolia

and Balkan. This revolutionary change of attitude in Sufi ontology engendered not only the enormous body of poetical literature, but a new mystical poetic language enriched with highly expressive sensual metaphors and symbolism.

The human-divine romance relationship, developed mainly in *Kashf al-asrār*, becomes the central theme and tale related with fervor and passion throughout the burgeoning tradition of the ‘religion of Love’ (*maz’hab-ē ʿeshq*) within the prolific Khorasani school of Sufi literature and its branch outs in other parts of the Persianate world. These poets wrote not only passionate pieces of prose and poetry expressing their devotion to God as Beloved, but poetically praised the revelation of His Beauty in the beautiful creatures of the natural and human world. Lastly, from the sixth/twelfth century onwards, among the followers of the Sufi way of love, one sees such prominent figures like Ahmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), and a century later, Owḥad al-Dīn Kermānī (d. 635/1238) and Fakhr al-Dīn Erāqī (610/1213—688/1289), who show uncommon erotic behaviors in public, justified by development of the poetics of love and *rēndī* in Sufism. This trend finds its culmination in the *ghazals* of Sa‘dī and Hafez as supreme *rēnds* amongst all Persian poets and great masters of the poetics of *rēndī*.²¹

²¹My friend, professor Assad Arjang, has kindly am thankful of him. performed the editing of my English text and I

NEW PUBLICATION:



Persian in Use: An Elementary Textbook of Language and Culture

Leiden University Press & University of Chicago Press

Anousha Sedighi

Persian in Use is an elementary Persian language and culture textbook designed for first-year Persian language students at college level. It offers a thematically organized and integrative approach to help students achieve proficiency in Persian language and culture. *Persian in Use* is accompanied by a website: www.persianinuse.com

LUP Textbooks | ISBN 9789087282172 | 400 pages | Paperback | Full color

Ordering Details:

US & Canada:

Title: Persian in Use

ISBN-13: 9789087282172

Price: \$ 85

orders@press.uchicago.edu

UK and Europe:

Title: Persian in Use

ISBN-13: 9789087282172

Price: £ 55

orders@nbninternational.com

Netherlands and Belgium:

Title: Persian in Use

ISBN-13: 9789087282172

Price € 69.50

orders@lup.nl