

Hafez : A Face-off with Virtue (updated)

## Hafez<sup>1</sup>: A Face off with Virtue

Hafez, Iran's foremost prodigy in lyric poetry, who lived in the 14th century Persia, was also the nemesis of religious zealots of his time and beyond. His life-long embroilment with dogmatic clerics – *Zahid* in his parlance - is widely reflected in his poetry. Furthermore, a fallacy projecting Hafez as a mystic poet has held ground through centuries and has distorted public perception of his message.

While faith-based assaults on Hafez during his lifetime and beyond are easier to comprehend, the process of contortion of the poet's philosophy and vision are more complex and insidious. In either case, the alluring quality of his work and potency of his message have motivated distortions. The refreshing novelty of his thoughts molded in a rhythmic aligning of words, his mastery of metaphor, trope, and metonymy and above all his aphorism, crafted in plain language, made of Hafez a monument in Persian lyric art as well as a folk idol. Many of the popular epigrams, axioms and bywords in to-day' Persian language indeed are keepsakes of his literally genius.

This article seeks to portray Hafez, his vision and legacy as they emerge from his poetry<sup>2</sup>. The translations of selected verses from his sonnets, for which the author takes responsibility, are liberal renditions adapted to English. They do not claim textual exactitude but purport to convey faithfully the broader sense and message. Needless to say, the sublime beauty of his lyrics and subtleties in construction of verses are impossible to capture in translation. A biographical note is provided in annex.

### 1-Hafez and Ulema

During his life-time, the Shiraz Ulema harassed Hafez not just for his life style – marked by adulation of wine<sup>3</sup> and pursuit of earthly pleasures - but more so for his acerbic commentary on precepts and strictures enjoined by clerics. His poetry is replete with passages reflecting this discord.

وا عظام کاین جلوہ در محراب و منبر میکنند

چون به خلوت میروند آن کارد یگر میکنند

مشکلی دارم ز دانشمند مجلس باز برس

توبه فر میان چرا خود توبه کمتر میکنند

گونیا باور نمیدارند روز دا وری  
کاین همه قلب و دغل در کار د اور میکنند

*Preachers who shine in virtue,  
In altars and pulpits,  
In retreat,  
Their ways belie what they preach.  
I have a query! Asking our mentor why?  
The apostles of penance,  
Penitent they seldom are.  
As if the last judgment they rebut,  
The Divinity distorted,  
And thrown in a false light..*

In another sonnet Hafiz is mocking and insolent:

گر زمسجد به خرابا ت شد م خورده مگیر  
مجلس وعظ دراز است و زمان خواه شد  
ایدل ار عشرت امر وز به فردا فکنی  
مایه نقد بقا را که ضمان خواه شد  
ماه شغبان منه از دست قدح کاین خورشید  
از نظر تا شب عید رمضان خواه شد

*Don't reprove,  
If I leave the mosque for the tavern,  
For preaching is long,*

***And the Time wouldn't stand idly by.***

***O' dear me, if you put off to-day's pleasures,***

***Who assures you,***

***That to-morrow shall ever come?***

***It's the month of Sha'ban,<sup>4</sup>***

***Don't let go of wine.***

***As this grail, like capricious sun,***

***Could vanish in Ramadan.***

In the following sonnet, Hafez confronts pious values of the clergy with his own earthly individualism:

عیب رندان مکن ایزاهد پاکیزه سرشت  
که گناه دگران بر تونخواهند نوشت  
من اگر خویم و گر بد تو پرو خود را باش  
هر کسی ان درود عاقبت کار که کشت  
نا امید م مکن از سا بقه لطف از ل  
تو بس برده چه دانی که  
که خوبست و که زشت  
حافظا روزاجل گر بکف اری جا می  
یکسر از کوی خرابات برندت به بهشت

***O' noble clergy! Torment not free-souls,***

***Their sins will not maculate thy deeds.***

***I may be virtuous or vile,***

***Mind thy gait, not mine.***

*You know best how,  
We all harvest what we sow*

*Despair me not of divine's merci,  
Beyond that curtain, who knows?  
What's good, what unworthy?  
Oh' Hafez, if before thy dying gasp,  
Thou dare one parting shot,  
From the tavern,  
Straight is thy way to the Temple of God.*

However, the poet's gibes were not directed uniquely against the crooked piety of the *Zahid*. In numerous verses he departs from religious orthodoxy and breaks sacrosanct taboos. The use of sacrilegious metaphors such as "*mortgaging the praying rug* (*saj'ādih* سجاده<sup>5</sup>)" to buy wine or, "*on thy mentor's behest, maculate the prayer rug with the wine stain*", are almost leitmotifs in his strophes. In one of the bolder fits of ecstasy, he sings:

ما مرید ان روی سوی کعبه چون آریم چون . روی سوی خانه خمار دارد پیرما

***We the disciples, How could we turn towards Mecca; <sup>6</sup> It is to the tavern that our mentor has set his sight".***

There are certain accounts, handed down chest to chest through centuries, which bear evidence to contemptuous attitude by clerics towards Hafez<sup>7</sup>. If this contempt only occasionally took on aspects of persecution it must have to do with the nature of the 14<sup>th</sup> century society in Persia as well as poet's own social standing and network of personal relations. The widespread influence among the savant of the period of Sufism - with its implied heresy- had already numbed to a certain extent religious sensitivities. Hafez whose fame, according to some accounts, had spread beyond Persia's central plateau during his lifetime, must have had local following and a network of influential friends. Above all during much of his life, notably the reigns of Abu Isaac Inju (b.d1321-1354), Shah Shuja (1331- 1384) and Shah Mansur, Hafez enjoyed varying degrees of royal patronage.

Some chroniclers have made allusion to refusal of *mullahs* to bury Hafez according to religious rites; others to desecration of his grave by religious zealots. While the evidence is scant, the plausibility of such behavior could hardly be dismissed. According to a widely cited anecdote<sup>8</sup>, the bickering over whether or not such rites should be administered was resolved only after resort to bibliomancy. The poet's own anthology (*Divan*) would have been used as a guide: It revealed a sonnet, of which the concluding line reads:

قدم دریغ مدار از جنازه حافظ

که گرچه غرق گناه است میرود به بهشت

**“Spare not a few steps behind the coffin of Hafez.**

***Sinful though he is, to paradise he shall go”***<sup>9</sup>

The anecdote is apocryphal. The *Divan* was compiled<sup>10</sup> some twenty years after the poet's death<sup>11</sup>. The practice of using the *Divan* in bibliomancy – now a fixture in Iranian folklore -- must have started at later stages. The anecdote however is depictive of misgivings which must have then existed among the zealots and which did not totally disappear through the ages. *Sir Percy Sykes* (1865-1945), a British historian, stressing this latter point, affirms that he had personally been an eyewitness to desecration of Hafez tomb in *Shiraz* in 1916.<sup>12</sup>

One episode of showdown with Ulema, the traces of which is found in Hafez's own poetry, is fairly well known<sup>13</sup>. While chroniclers and Hafez scholars differ on the sequence of events and identity of the protagonists, the thrust of the story is uncontested. In one of his poems Hafez had derided the hypocrisy of a religious magnate who pretended to have trained his cat to prostrate with him during the daily praying rites.<sup>14</sup> “

ای کبک خوشخرام که خوش میروی بناز

غره مشو که گر به زاهد نماز کرد

**“O, strutting partridge swagger not!”**

***“The cat of the Zahid knows how to perform prayers.”***

According to one version of the story<sup>15</sup>, clerics found their chance for revenge when sometime later, in one of his verses, Hafez mused about the *hereafter*:

گر مسلمانى از این است که حافظ دارد

وای اگر از پس امروز بود فردا نی

**“Hafez, your faith so hollow!**

***Pity on your soul,***

**Should after to-day [life]...there be a morrow [hereafter]”**

This verse was taken as proof that Hafez had cast doubt on the veracity of the ultimate judgment. The ‘Day of Resurrection “ *Ma’ād*,” being one of the five pillars of the Islam, the offense was deemed an apostasy.<sup>16</sup> A frightened Hafez goes in hiding and confidentially consults a jurisprudent friend by the name of *Mulana Zeinuddin abu-Bakre* who advises him that the statement about the “hereafter” should be attributed to a non-Moslem who, as a matter of course, could not be held to the Islamic strictures. Hafez goes to a retreat and after some brooding, magisterially amends his ode by placing the following lines just before the controversial verse:

این حد یثم چه خوش آمد که سحرگه میگفت

بر در میکدهای با دف و نی ترسانی

گر مسلمان از این است که حافظ دارد

وای اگر از پس امروز بود فردا نی

*I was enchanted at daybreak heat,*

*Meeting a man of Nicene creed,*

*By the tavern he played reed,*

*And chanted a mantra, for me to heed:*

*Hafez your faith so hollow !*

*Pity on your soul,*

*Should after to-day...there be a morrow*

## **2- The message of Hafez**

For Hafiz the essence of truth lies in pursuit of genuine human instincts, not in their denial. He projects himself a philanderer (نظرباز), adulating the wine and infatuated with love. He candidly exposes his inner longings for earthly pleasures.

ز حسن روی جوانان تمتعی بردار

که در کمینگه عمر است مکر عالم پیر

***Relish that fleeting joy of a young embrace,***

***The old-age is lying treacherously in wait***

***To take you in and deface.***

For him, the infamy and stigma is better than pietism and what he considered as trumpery of the hereafter. Only fools, he says in one of his memorable poems, leave the palpable for illusory promises:

کنون که میدمد از بوستان نسیم بهشت

من و شراب فرحبخش و یار حور سرشت

گدا چرا نزند لاف سلطنت امروز

که خیمه سایه ابر است و یزمگه لب کشت

چمن حکایت ارد بیهشت میگوید

نه عاقلست آنکه نسیه خرید و نقد بهشت

***As the breeze through meadows,***

***Blows a heavenly fragrance,***

***Sitting by the side of a belle with refreshing wine,***

***Why can't then the pauper pretend to be the king?***

***His canopy, the shadow of the clouds,***

***His banquet, the edge of the mead.***

***The greenery heralds April,***

***Only fools cast off the palpable,***

***And hollow promises they heed,***

The *Divan* is replete with plain or metaphoric assertions of this nature. Their recurrence excludes any contention that they may be less than central to the poet's outlook. This individuality, stressing the subjective aspect of human existence, is the essence of his philosophy. He rejects the single recipe for salvation proposed by the apostles of the morality and cheerfully admits to be sinful. The creator could not have imparted instincts to humans and punish them for it too.

His light-hearted treatment of tales of creation as told in holy books, reflects a characteristic insouciance, touching at times on insolence. A case in point is a much-acclaimed sonnet of which the first three verses read:

دوش دیدم که ملا یک در میخا نه زدند

گل آدم بسرشتند و به پیما نه زدند

سا کنان حرم ستر عفاف ملکوت

با من راه نشین با ده مستانه زدند

آسمان پار امانت نتوانست کشید

قرعه فال به نام من دیوانه زدند

***I dreamt at dawn<sup>17</sup>,***

***Angels were knocking at the tavern.***

***Of the Adam's clay,***

***They molded a grail and drank wine***

***The nymphs of Divine's harem,***

***Sat by me, the drifter,***

***And mirthfully reveled.***

***Heavens could not bear the secret;***

***The burden befell on me, the amok.***



Yet, Hafez is concerned with divinity and metaphysics. For him divinity is a mystery beyond the reach of human intellect. This agnostic vision of the universe and the creation is laid out in several of his sonnets. A case in point is the penultimate stanza of one of his famous sonnets - with the typically composite and discursive themes<sup>18</sup> – of which selected verses are translated below:

اگر آن ترک شیرازی بدست آورد دل ما را  
به خال هندوش بخشم سمرقند و بخارا را  
بده ساقی می باقی که در جنت نخواهی یافت  
کنار آب رکنا باد و گلگشت مصلا را  
من از آن حسن روزا فزون که یوسف داشت دانستم  
که عشق از برده عصمت برون آورد ذلیخا را  
نصیحت گوش کن جانا که از جان دوست تر دارند  
جوانان سعادتمند پند پیر دانا را  
حدیث از مطرب و می گو و راز دهر کمتر جو  
که کس نکشود و نگشاید به حکمت این معمارا

*O' Turkish belle of Shiraz,*<sup>19</sup>

*Let me into your heart,*

*As alone for that adorning mole below your lips,*

*I give away Samarkand and Bukhara*<sup>20</sup>.

*O' beautiful wine-girl, pour me the eternal wine*

*As in the Garden of Eden,*

*Nothing bests*<sup>21</sup> *the side of the Roknabad stream,*

*Nor the splendor of Mosalla*<sup>22</sup> *garden.*

*From accounts of Joseph's*<sup>23</sup> *glaring looks*

*I divined,*

*That love would blow off,  
Zuleikha's veil of chastity.  
Listen dearly to what the old pundit says,  
Words he utters are gold:  
"Talk but of wine and music,  
As mysteries of universe are untold,  
Beware! This riddle does not fit,  
Into the bounds of human wit."*

### 3-The mystification of Hafez

The crushing entry of Hafez into the cultural landscape of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Persia and beyond was bound to resonate far. It became a turning point that was not going to leave the succeeding generations of intellectuals and religious establishments indifferent. Going by prevalent accounts, already during his lifetime Hafez had gained a certain status in Persian-speaking provinces of the old empire and India<sup>24</sup>.

A process of mystification of Hafez and inevitable distortion of his message was henceforth set in motion. The plain language of the poet in adulation of life and temporal pleasures was given an esoteric twist; to every metaphor was ascribed a Gnostic sense. The *Divan* became the *Lisān 'ul Qeib*<sup>25</sup>, the language of the hidden. Over the time it became an article of faith in literary circles in Iran to view Hafez as a mystic poet<sup>26</sup>. Encouraged by clerics and Sufi luminaries, common people came to view Hafez as a Sufi who employed the language of love and wine as symbols of divinity and truth. How has this come about is of course difficult to trace and scientifically document. But one may attempt to draw a historical sketch in which this transfiguration could be understood.

As of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Sufism had been the dominant trend among the men of letter and highbrow in Iran and in much of the Moslem world. Great Sufi luminaries, such as *Farid-uddin Attar Neyshapouri*, (1142- 1221), Mowlana *Jalal-uddin Muhammad Rumi* known as *Molavi* (1207- 1273) and *Shahab-uddin Sohrevardi* (12<sup>th</sup> century) had all but saturated the intellectual and learning environment of the epoch in which Hafez passed his formative years. They were to be joined, in the coming centuries, by a galaxy of poets, thinkers and writers who belonged to the same spiritual school.

The origins and the content of Sufism are beyond the scope of this writing. Suffice it to recall that it sprang out of Islam in the early centuries and was probably influenced by Greek pantheism as well as ascetic influences from India. In essence, it is a theosophical school believing in unity of the creator and creatures. It emphasizes self-denial in an arduous spiritual journey to reach the creator and attain the verity during one's lifetime<sup>27</sup>. Some have seen Sufism as an outlet to escape the rigidity of social precepts of Islam by providing an inner channel to divinity. This has imparted an elitist as well as an esoteric character to the movement of which gnosis or mystic knowledge by the initiated is the hallmark.

While Sufism contains undeniable heretic properties its outward limits does not avowedly transcend Islam<sup>28</sup>. Hence, despite incessant quarrels which confronted Islamic orthodoxy with Islamic mysticism<sup>29</sup>, some unwritten pact of coexistence and complicity has existed between the two from the time of *Ibn al-Arabi* in 12<sup>th</sup> century to present time.

It is not excluded that in his salad days Hafez may have belonged to a Sufi sect; nor is it totally inconceivable that he might never have formally renounced such affiliation for expediency sake. His learning process must have started in *qu'rānic* schools, where he learned the holy book by the rote (hence his title "Hafez" or the memorizer). His subsequent tutorship may have occurred under a learned teacher of unorthodox leanings to whom Hafez refers as sage or mentor. Gertrude Bell has identified this master as Sheikh *Mahmud Attar*, adding that he may not have been a renowned scholar or a model of abstinence<sup>30</sup>.

Some of the Hafez poems do have mystic overtones, just as others refer to biblical or *qu'rānic* tales. Still in many other verses he alludes to or makes commentary on social or literary topics of interest to his contemporaries. The frequent usage of amphibology and double-entendre in Hafez poetry could but lend itself to conflicting interpretations of his thoughts. Many authors have pointedly remarked that whatever the readers bent, his poetry caters to it. Few have acknowledged the essentially poetic vocation of such constructions. The following sonnet, with mystical inspiration and fragrance typifies the works of this strain:

سالها دل طلب جام جم از ما میکرد  
آنچه خود داشت ز بیگانه تمنا میکرد  
گوهری کز صدف کون و مکان بیرون بود  
طلب از گمشدگان لب دریا میکرد  
مشکل خویش بر پیر مغان بردم دوش

کو به تا نید نظر حل معما میکرد  
دیدمش خرم و خندان قدح با ده بدست  
وان در آن آینه صد گونه تماشا میکرد  
گفتم این جام جها نبین بتو کی داد حکیم  
گفت آنروز که این گنبد مینا میکرد  
بیدلی در همه احوال خدا با او بود  
او نمیدیدش و از دور خدایا میکرد  
گفت آن یار کزو گشت سردار بلند  
جرمش این بود که اسرار هویدا میکرد  
فیض روح القدس از باز مدد فرماید  
مسیحا میکرد دیگران هم بکنند آنچه

*For years, my heart craved the Mythical Bowl,<sup>31</sup>  
I had it in me, yet searched all round,  
The pearl, out of the bounds of time and space,  
Looked for its shell amidst the beach sands,  
Among the lost seafarers.*

\*\*\*

*I took my quiz to the Magian sage,<sup>32</sup>  
Who solves problems in an instant gaze.  
In good spirit he was, with a cup of wine,  
His look piercing the Bowl in praise,  
“When were you given” I asked,*

*"This Gnostic Wealth?"*

*It was, he said, when the welkin was cast!*

*The torpid man who had the God in him*

*Could feel nothing and clamored for Him.*

*That other soul mate, hoisted in gallows,<sup>33</sup>*

*What was his crime? Betraying the unspoken!*

*True, should the Holy Spirit intercede,*

*Others could do what Messiah did.*

While mystic properties are present, nothing in this and other similar poetry amount to a direct expression of opinion on the part of the poet. What is striking here is the beauty of his lyrics (in the original Persian) and the way he has remolded, in a superior construction, leitmotifs in Persian and Arab literature.

The key to understanding his philosophy and outlook may be to stop interpreting and start listening to what he says in plain unabashed language. This boils down to an avowal of ignorance about divinity and metaphysics, temporal pleasures that must be grasped with no qualms about hereafter, adulation of wine and tavern not just as an escape or a source of pleasure but also as the antipode to the cant and false piety of clerics and Sufi luminaries.

These themes are ever-present in Hafez poetry. Needless to say, they run counter to basic tenets of Sufism<sup>34</sup>. The Sufi's indubitable faith in unison of man with divinity implies certitudes that Hafez humbly disowned. Moreover, the penchant in Sufism for abstinence, if not outright asceticism, is so clearly out of character with Hafez that it stretches credulity to place him within their ranks. But once again let his poetry take the witness stand. On several occasions Hafez berates the hypocrisy in Sufi's conduct:

نقد صوفی نه همه صافی و بیغش باشد ای بسا خرقه که مستوجب آتش باشد

***The Sufi's gold is not always unalloyed<sup>35</sup>.***

***Loads the woolen garbs<sup>36</sup> which deserve to be burned."***

Or elsewhere:

صوفی بیا که که خرقه سا لوس بر کشیم

وین نقش زرق را خط بطلان بسر کشیم

بیرون جهیم سرخوش و از بزم صوفیان

غارت کنیم با ده و شا هد به بر کشیم

***Sufi, come along***

***Let's shed this hypocritical cloak,***

***And recant all cant,***

***Let's dash out blithely and from the Sufi's feast,***

***Loot all the wine jars and hold in our embrace all the beauties.***

In another verse he clearly says that sophism as a school has nothing to offer.

در میخانه ام بگشا که هیچ از خا نقه نگشود

گرت باور بود ورنه سخن این بود و ما گفتیم

***I say what I have to say, take it as you will:***

***Open me the door of the tavern,***

***As in the temple of Sufis no doors could ever be opened***<sup>37</sup>

The use of Sufi nomenclature and mystic imagery has no doubt brought grist to the mill of those who have sought to sanctify Hafez despite the poet's unabashed avowal of sinfulness even depravity. In a versified remark to a preacher he retorts:

***“ O' preacher you, stop your gibberish and leave me alone,***

***I am not to fall for your cant.***

***This is how fate wanted me cast,***

***Earthly pleasures I embrace,***

***And there I never recant.”*** <sup>38</sup>

As referred to earlier, moralists assigned an occult meaning to every thing that in their lexicon denoted a sin. Thus, wine symbolizes the truth and love refers to adulation of the divinity<sup>39</sup>. Just as the rabbinate managed to project the erotic scenery in the Old Testaments' "*La Cantique des Cantiques*," as divine adulations by Salomon, so did the Iranian mystics distorted the message of Hafez and called the star poet one of their own.

#### 4- Panegyric Poetry by Hafez.

Some detractors have sought to smear Hafez for his panegyric poetry.

It is inappropriate to seek to shield Hafez against the criticism that he indulged in sycophancy in his poetry to please the reigning monarchs and key figures in their entourage. During his career as poet, he lived under six rulers<sup>40</sup> of whom at least three accorded him their patronage. For his livelihood Hafez depended on this benefaction as poetry *per se* did not generate income. A job that he purportedly held as a teacher in the Shiraz College, other than having been tenuous<sup>41</sup>, is unlikely to have provided enough to cater to his life-style and largesse. His poetry reveals that he had difficult episodes where he felt the squeeze due to lack of attention on the part of his patrons. Other than resorting to plain flattery, in some of his odes, Hafez made hints, no doubt for the ears of his benefactors, referring to his financial problems. In most cases, Hafez has merely added one line or two, usually at the end of an otherwise normal sonnet, meant to be palatable to a benefactor. On one occasion, through a versified missive to a confidant of the ruler Hafez requests his correspondent to find an opportune moment during a one- to-one audience with the ruler and having first sweetened his mood by a pleasantry, remind his master of Hafez's stipends<sup>42</sup>.

The above said, it must be underscored that Hafez by no means had the vocation of a courtier poet and the panegyric share of his poetry constitutes a small portion of his works<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, it appears that in most cases Hafez genuinely liked personalities whom he lauded in his poetry. This was no doubt the case with Shah Abu Isaac, about whom he wrote, to his own peril, nostalgic songs posthumously. Abu Isaac had indeed been overthrown and publicly executed by his successor Emir Mubarez Mozaffar<sup>44</sup>. A large share of panegyric poetry is addressed to the latter's son and successor Shah Shuja, under whose patronage Hafez spent the longest stretch of his poetic career. It was to Abu Isaac however that Hafez was most genuinely attached. In one verse, Hafez lauds the defunct king and four of his lieutenants for the prosperity that Shiraz had known during his reign. In another elegy for the slaughtered king, he evokes his souvenirs with nostalgia:

یاد باد آنکه سر کوی توام منزل بود

دیده را روشنی از خاک درت حاصل بود  
راست چون سوسن و گل از اثر صحبت پاک

بر زبان بود مرا آنچه ترا در دل بود

آه از این

جور و تطاول که در این دامگاه است

آه از آن سوز و نیازی که در آن محفل بود

در دلم بود که بی دوست نباشم هرگز

چه توان کرد که سعی من و دل باطل بود

راستی خاتم فیروزه بوا سحاقی

خوش درخشید ولی دولت مستعجل بود

دیدنی آن قهقهه کبک خرامان حافظ

که ز سر پنجه شاهین قضا غافل بود

*O' cherished memories,*

*Of days when my abode was near yours,*

*And the dust from your doorstep,*

*Lightened my days.*

*Straight we were like young flower stalks,*

*So pure were our souls,*

*And from my mouth flowed,*

*Words coming from your heart.*

*Look at the snare that lurked along our path,*

*And remember our solitudes and fervors,*



*In my heart, I pined not to be,  
The day my soul-mate was no more.  
Alas, hollow was my vow  
And feckless my resolve.  
True, the glimmer of Isaac's turquoise,  
Was dazzling, yet only a flash in the pan.  
O' Hafez did you hear not,  
The laughter of strutting partridge,  
Insouciant of claws of the falcon?<sup>45</sup>*

Inversely, Hafez shows contempt for *Emir Mubarez* who upon accession to power instituted a puritanical society the like of which were only to be seen a century later in *Savonarola's*<sup>46</sup> ephemeral theocracy in Florence.

Poems of Hafez during this period are replete with reproach, anger and nostalgia. In one passing remark, Hafez shows his disdain for the turncoats who seemingly scurried to the court to pay allegiance to the new king. Although no evidence to this effect exists, it could well have been written after the execution of *Shah Abu Isaac*. He writes:

حافظ برو که بندگی پادشاه وقت

گر جمله میکنند تو باری نمیکنی

***“Let others crawl and bow,  
To the majesty of the incumbent Shah,  
Hafez thou shalt never grovel in awe”.***

As the advent of *Emir Mubarez* cast a pall over his hometown Shiraz, Hafez composed a poetic lamentation yet to be matched in Persian lyrics. (Selective verses)

یاری اندر کس نمی بینم یا ران را چه شد

دوستی کی آخر آمد دستداران را چه شد  
لعلی از کان مروت بر نیا مد سا لها ست  
تابش خورشید و سعی باد و باران را چه شد  
شهریاران بود و خاک مهربانان این دیار  
مهربانی کی سر آمد شهریاران را چه شد  
صد هزاران گل شگفت و بانگ مرغی بر نخاست  
عند لیبان را چه پیش آمد هزاران را چه شد  
حافظ اسرار الهی کس نمیداند خموش  
از که میپرسی که دور روزگار را چه شد

***Amity no more! Where are the friends?***

***How did human bonds whither,***

***And friendships perish?***

***Of abundant generosity which existed yore,***

***It's been years,***

***No token came to fore,***

***What of the beams of sunshine?***

***The bluster of winds,***

***And the plenitude of rains?***

***This was the citadel of love, the land of caring,***

***When did fraternity expire?***

***Where are the kings gone<sup>47</sup>?***

***One hundred thousand flowers bloomed,***

***Yet no bird sang;***

***What came of nightingales?***

***Where are the sparrows gone?***

***Hafez, divine's secrets are unknown!***

***To whom you then turn in vain?***

***To lament this bane.***

### 5- The Legacy

Hafez needs not be idolized. Assigning him virtues that he disowned will not make of him a greater poet. His songs mirror the essence of human nature in its purest form, driven by passion of living and a yearning for earthly pleasures in an acute awareness that death is lurking to bring it all to an end.

بمی عمارت دل کن که این جهان خراب

بر آن سراست که از خاک ما بسازد خشت

***With wine nourish your soul,***

***As the Time prowls,***

***To herald your doom,***

***Molding bricks,***

*From the ashes of your tomb.*

But in him, death inspires no excessive awe. Hafez greets death with serenity of men of his ilk. In a moving valedictory sonnet, he comes eye- to -eye with death. ( Selected verses).

حجاب چهره حان میشود غبار تنم

خوشادمی که ازین چهره پرده برفکنم

چنین قفس نه سزای چو من خوش الحانی است

آ روم به گلشن رضوان که مرغ آن چمنم

عیان نشد که چرا آدم چرا رفتم

دریغ درد که غافل ز کار خویشتم

***Like a layer of dust,***

***My body veils my soul;***

***Blissful the moment when comes the call,***

***And curtains fall.***

***Unfit this cage is to arrest my soul,***

***So to Eden I fly,***

***I am the bird of that garden.***

***Pity, it didn't come to light at last,***

***Why did I come, why didn't it last?***

***Alas, I bow out benighted,***

***Blind to mysteries of existence.***

Hafez is conscious that his poetry and legacy is a gift to humanity that death could not take away: He wrote.

هرگز نمیرد آنکه دلش زنده شد بعشق . ثبت است در جریده عالم دوام ما

***The one whose heart was lit with flame of love,***

***Shall never die,***

***My eternity is heralded in the annals".***

To the posterity he presciently wrote:

از سر تربیت من چون گذری همت خواه

که زیارتگه رندان جهان خواهد بود

بروای زاهد خود بین که ز چشم من و تو

راز این پرده نهان است و نهان خواهد ماند

***When you pass by my grave,  
Seek ardor,  
For my tomb shall become a pilgrimage site,  
For free-souls, world over.  
Beware! O' self-righteous clergy,  
Your eyes and mine,  
Cannot behold the hidden,  
Behind that curtain.***

#### Annex I,

#### Hafez: A biographical note.

For the Persian-speaking people in Iran and elsewhere in the region, Hafez is a household name. Beyond a literally acclaim of unsurpassed scale, his poetry is viewed by masses with an aura of unearthly magnetism. His anthology, *divan*,<sup>48</sup> is consulted by common folks for inspiration and guidance in crucial crossroads of their lives through the age-old practice of bibliomancy.

Little wonder that his biography, just as his vision and philosophy, has fallen prey to fantasizing and mystification. Legends have sought invariably to sanctify Hafez or ascribe to him mystic dispositions. In one of the more sapid tales, he is projected as a poor orphan who illicitly auditioned schools and learned to recite Koran by heart while working as an errand boy in a bakery. He then fell hopelessly in love with a woman of high society and went to meditation and contemplation until one magic night when he was bestowed with the heavenly gift of poetry.

دوش وقت سحر از غصه تجاتم دادند وان در آن ظلمت شب آب حیا تم دا دند

*“The herald finally arrived at dawn,*

*And in the murky night,*

*I was offered the epitome of life”.*

Scholarly research however places Hafez in a middle class Shiraz family that saw to his early schooling and no doubt higher learning in the style of the fourteen- century Persia Born around 1315-17<sup>49</sup> in Shiraz, Hafez grew to become an erudite and highly polished young man no doubt helped by innate intellectual faculties. Not only he learned to recite by rote the Koran in “fourteen versions,<sup>50</sup> but he was well versed in Arab and Persian literature, in history, philosophy and astronomy. He is said to have given courses on *Koranic* studies in the great Shiraz college, using as his main text a book authored by Zamkhashri titled *Sharh-i Kash 'shāf*,<sup>51</sup>.

Hafez soon became a favourite of King Sheikh Abu Isaac Inju for whom he wrote posthumous poetry with nostalgic undertones as he held him in genuine affection. *Inju* who ruled from 1334 to 1354 over the provinces of Fars and Isfahan was, according to the Arab explorer *ibn Batuta*, a kind-hearted and well-liked monarch. Other chroniclers however have underscored his lack of political savvy and portrayed him as a carefree man given to excessive depravity. Much of his tenure was wasted in vain campaigns against his rival *Amir Mubarezuddin Mozaffar*. The latter, subsequently established the *Mozaffarid* dynasty in Shiraz after he finally defeated and beheaded *Inju* in 1354. Hafez was in Shiraz at the time of the execution of his former patron and may have watched the public execution in the town's main square.

*Amir Mubarezudin Mozaffar* was an excessively strict and religiously dogmatic man who pledged nominal allegiance to the deposed Caliph in Cairo, and established a puritanical regime, ordering taverns closed to the chagrin of Hafez. The new ruler went on to conquer Azerbaijan and Arak, before being arrested and blinded by his own sons. During his reign, an embittered Hafez wrote sarcastic and melancholic sonnets denouncing the hypocrisy of the pious and the absurdity of the strictures they imposed.

Shah *Shuja* who replaced his father as the king restored Hafez to his earlier prominence and patronized him in a similar fashion as *Inju*. Some authors have maintained that the poet held administrative (*divani*) functions under *Shah Shuja*<sup>52</sup>.

Hafez gained a certain recognition and esteem already during his early years as evidenced by his close ties with the Shiraz royal household. Progressively, his poetry must have travelled and his fame spread to remote provinces of the old empire. Anecdotic accounts refer to invitations extended to him by the king of Deccan in India and by *Sutan Ahmad Jalayer* in Baghdad but Hafez was not a keen traveller. The only travel that he is known to have undertaken was to *Yazd* in the central plateau of Iran. This happened when his relations *Shah Shuja* had turned sour following a spat.<sup>53</sup> He appears to have also had embroiled in a civil lawsuit<sup>54</sup> which may explain his two years absence from Shiraz. The ruler of *Yazd* to whom Hafez had turned as a possible benefactor did not turn out to be a generous mecena and Hafez, nostalgic about Shiraz, returned there under the protection of the grand vizier *Touranshah*.<sup>55</sup> Hafez regained the king's favour but his poetry suggests that his financial situation remained fragile.

The final decade of Hafez's life and career coincided with a period of political turmoil marked by irredentist wars. This was in part due to Shah *Shuja*'s premature death in September 1363. His crown prince *Yahya* was not of the same calibre and the *Mozaffarid* princes declined him allegiance. King *Mansur*, (*Shuja*'s nephew) who grabbed hold of power at the expense of *Yahya*, reigned for a few years but soon had to face the awesome challenge by the Uzbek conqueror Tamerlane (1336-1405). The latter occupied Shiraz a first time in 1388 and again in 1391. Tamerlane second expedition to Shiraz followed an epic battle with Shah *Mansur* who gambled a

heroic face- to- face with Tamerlane and was killed in action after having inflicted heavy casualties on the invading force.

Hafez had developed friendly ties with Shah Mansur but wars and rapid turns of fortune left him in a precarious financial situation at his old age. The account of his encounter with Tamerlane, referred to in the main text, underscores this precariousness<sup>56</sup>. Yet it also underlines the attainment by the poet of a certain status and recognition.

While Hafez poetry is cited in some 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts, his name was only parsimoniously mentioned in texts written by his contemporaries. It is from 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards that full recognition was accorded to him. His anthology, *Divan*, was compiled by one of his presumed disciples<sup>57</sup> some two decades after the poet's death which happened in 1389. The introduction written by the compiler provides some clues about the poet's personality and character traits. He is depicted as an outgoing and affable man who sat with the rich and the poor, the learned as well unlettered common folks and enjoyed the company of the youth. Hafez must have been a tender and affectionate individual who got attached to his surroundings<sup>58</sup> and was averse to causing pain to others.

مباش در پی آزار و هر چه خواهی کن  
که در شریعت ما عیبر ازین گناهی نیست

*Do what you wish in life save hurting others,*

*In my canon, there is no sin but this one.*

Hafez married once and had a son from this marriage. It is not clear at what stage of his life this marriage took place. It is known, however, that both the wife and his son died at a young age. Hafez refers affectionately to both in his poetry and laments their death.

قره العین من آن میوه دل یا د ش باد  
که چه آسان بشد و کار مرا مشکل کرد  
آه و فریاد که از چشم حسود مه چرخ  
در لحد ماه کمان ا بروی من منزل کرد

*The light of my eye, the pearl of my heart,*

*Cherished be her memory,*

*How easily I lost her and how hard it was to bear.*

*Cry shame!*

*The bad omen of the moon's envious eye*<sup>59</sup>;

*Befell on her and rapt my belle in a shroud.*

Referring to his son, he writes:

دلا دیدی که آن فرزانه فرزند

چه دید اندر خم این طاق رنگین

بجای لوح سیمین در کنارش

فلک بر سر نهادش لوح سنگین

*O' my bleeding heart,*

*What a fate for that cherished son!*

*Instead of a belle by his side,*

*He got a ledger on his head.*

Hafez is known in literally circles outside Iran and his poems have been translated to several languages. Among the earlier non-Iranian Hafez scholars Ahmad Sudi Bosnavi deserve a special mention. His *Commentary on Divan*, was written circa 1595 and published in Istanbul in 1834. The Austrian diplomat Von Hammer translated Hafez into German (1815-1819), which may have inspired Goethe's "*Westöstliche Divan*."

Finally, a special tribute is due to Gertrude Bell, a leading British female orientalist who as a young explorer traveled to Iran in the eighteen nineties and made a full translation of Hafez into English. None of the translations, including tit-bits done by the author of present article, has done justice to the sublime beauty of the Hafez poetry and subtleties, both in form and substance.