

UNCHANGING PERCEPTION OF *LOYALTY* FROM RUMI TO HAFIZ:
TWO SPECIFIC VERSES FROM
DIVAN-I SHAMS AND DIVAN-I HAFIZ

Menekşe TEMİZKAN*

ÖZ

Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi and Khwaja Shams-ud-Din Muhammad Hafiz-e Shirazi are two highly influential mystic poets. Owing to their distinct ways of expressing their passions, oaths and promises with their beloved, their poems have been attracting a great number of people from different walks of life in all parts of the world for centuries. According to some scholars, they are the closest and, at the same time, the most apart poets in the Iranian literature. For Rumi and Hafiz all the roads lead to the beloved, through Aristotelian catharsis due to separation. This paper offers an analysis of the concept of *loyalty* in Divan-i Shams (also known as Divan-i Kabir) and Divan-i Hafiz, by focusing on two specific verses, which were written in a remarkably similar wording, even though Rumi and Hafiz lived in different centuries. Does a similar depiction of *loyalty* in these verses mean that the two poets had an overlapping understanding of the concept? The results of the study indicate that Rumi and Hafiz perceived *loyalty* in similar terms. On the other hand, considering Rumi's spiritual framework and the mundane approach Hafiz adopted in his works, the paper also claims that *loyalty* was portrayed rather differently by the two poets.

Keywords: Rumi, Hafiz, Loyalty, Love, Beloved.

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MEVLÂNA'DAN HAFIZ'A DEĞİŞMEYEN VEFA ALGISI:
DİVAN-I ŞEMS VE DİVAN-I HAFIZ'DAN İKİ ÖZEL BEYİT

ABSTRACT

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Mevlâna Celaleddin Rumi ve Hafız-ı Şirazi etkileri oldukça yüksek olan mutasavvıf şairlerdir. Tutkularını, yeminlerini, vaatlerini ve sevilenle (beloved) ahitlerini ifade etmekte kullandıkları özgün dil sayesinde, yüzyıllardır dünyanın çeşitli bölgelerinde bulunan ve farklı yaşam tarzlarını benimsemiş çok sayıda insanı cezbetmektedirler. Mevlâna Celaleddin Rumi ve Hafız-ı Şirazi bazı akademisyenlere göre İran edebiyatının birbirine en yakın ve aynı zamanda en uzak olan şairleridir. Her ikisi için de bütün yollar, sevilenden ayrı olmadan kaynaklanan Aristocu arınma (katarsis) yoluyla sevilene çıkmaktadır. Bu bildiri Divan-ı Şems (Divan-ı Kebir olarak da bilinmektedir) ve Divan-ı Hafız'da *vefa* kavramını, şairleri Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi ve Hafız-ı Şirazi farklı yüzyıllarda yaşamış olmalarına rağmen, şaşırtıcı biçimde benzer kelimeler kullanılarak kaleme alınmış iki özel beyiti temel alarak analiz etmektedir. *Vefa* kavramının sözkonusu iki beyitte benzer şekilde tasvir edilmiş olması Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi ve Hafız-ı Şirazi'nin bu kavramı birbiriyle örtüşen biçimde algıladıkları anlamına mı gelmektedir? Bu çalışmanın sonuçları bir yandan Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi ve Hafız-ı Şirazi'nin *vefa* kavramını benzer şekilde algıladıklarını gösterirken, öte yandan, Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi'nin içinde hareket ettiği manevi çerçeveye karşın, Hafız-ı Şirazi'nin eserlerinde benimsediği dünyevi yaklaşımı dikkate alarak, iki şairin *vefa* kavramını oldukça farklı betimlediklerini de ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mevlana, Hafız, Vefa, Aşk, Maşuk.

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Introduction

Both Divan-i Shams and Divan-i Hafiz were written in *ghazal* poetic form, which addresses love in either metaphorical or real fashion. Love, in other words, is the main focus for *ghazal*,¹ which has become a commonly employed style of poem in Persian literature in the thirteenth century. By using this structure, poets have engaged in comprehensive descriptions of love, lover and beloved. Words associated with different parts of the body, such as hair, eyes and nose, as well as words from nature for instance flowers, trees and plants of different types have been used by poets to create vivid images of the beloved in the minds of the readers. Describing the agony of being separated from beloved and the joy of being united with him have been the main objective of the poets.² To put it differently, poets have refrained from articulating emotional state of lovers directly. They have mastered in creating ambiguity by loading the intended meanings on different words, through which they have puzzled and amazed readers in their attempts to understand and associate themselves with the poetically re-created reality. In ghazals, there have also been constant references to love legends, such as Layla and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad, or Yusuf and Zulaikha to provide a well-known context to the feelings communicated.³

Jalal ad-Din Rumi and Hafiz-e Shirazi are two highly influential Iranian poets. Their poems have been attracting a great number of people from different walks of life in all parts of the world for centuries because of their distinct ways of expressing their love for and oath with their beloved. They both endured great suffering due to being separated from their beloved, purified themselves during the process through Aristotelian catharsis and proved their *loyalty*.

Their verses have been memorized and recited not only by the educated

* Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, *Hafiz and His Contemporaries: Poetry, Performance and Patronage in Fourteenth Century Iran* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 9.

² Priscilla Soucek, "Interpreting the Ghazals of Hafiz," *Res: Anthropology and aesthetics* 43, (Spring 2003): 149.

³ *Ibid.*, 149.

but also common people in every possible social setting.⁴ Some scholars maintain that Rumi and Hafiz are the closest and, at the same time, the most apart poets in the Iranian literature. They might be considered close in the sense that for both of them all the roads lead to the beloved. On the other hand, by looking at the paths they followed to reach their beloved, we can detect the patterns that differentiate them.

In this paper, an analysis of the concept of *loyalty* in Divan-i Shams and Divan-i Hafiz is offered. *Loyalty* here is defined as being and remaining loyal to the beloved, regardless of the hardship the whole process includes. The paper focuses on two specific verses, which were written in a remarkably similar wording, even though Rumi and Hafiz lived in different centuries to initiate and develop its arguments. Does a similar depiction of *loyalty* in these verses mean that the two poets had an overlapping understanding of the concept?

"I made an oath with joy.

Joy will be mine.

I have a promise with the beloved.

*The beloved will become soul to me."*⁵

Rumi

"I made an oath with the beloved,

As long as I have soul in my body.

I will cherish the devotees in his parish,

*As my own soul."*⁶ Hafiz

⁴ Ainsworth R. Spofford, "Characteristics of Persian Poetry," The North American Review 140, no. 341 (1885): 328-45, 2020, 337.

⁵ Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, *Divan-i Kebir Meter 15: Hezec Museddes Mahfuz*, trans. Nevit Ergin (Los Angeles: Echo Publications, 2002), 74.

⁶ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. II, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: IbeX Publication, 2007), 725.

Love and the Beloved

This paper defines *love* in Sufi terms. Love is the annihilation of lover in beloved. That is to say, love makes the lover dissolve in the beloved. Lover and beloved become one in the process. To put it differently, in the true love, lover loses his or her identity for the sake of union with the beloved.⁷ The Sufi view that “the sun can reveal itself in the atom; the ocean can reveal itself in a single drop; and God can reveal himself in the human beloved” is a different statement of this claim. Sufism believes in unity of existence and seeks divine intimacy. Human beings have the potential to purify themselves to the point that they become one with the Creator, who is referred to as the Beloved.

For Rumi, love in all forms constitutes a dimension of love for God. Love, regardless its kind, takes the lover to the doorsteps of God. Love elevates lover. “It allows an individual who is ‘raw’ or immature to attain a ‘cooked’ or even a ‘burnt’ state.” Moreover, due to intense experience of love, lover turns selfless for the sake of the Beloved.⁸

Hafiz understood love in similar terms with Rumi: “Since I have become acquainted with love, I am considered to be one of the forgiven ones.” He was critical of those who considered love as sinful. He retaliated by calling those who are not in love as sinners. He had a firm belief in God’s forgiving nature. “Why should I worry? I have such a forgiving God.”⁹ Love, for Hafiz was like a stressful situation. Once one went through it, there was no way going back from it. One has to remain loyal and bear the suffering in the process.

In being a lover, is no escape from consuming and being content;

⁷ Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *The Paradoxes of Love* (California: The Golden Sufi Center, 1996), 40.

⁸ David R. Fideler, Sabrineh Fideler, *Love’s Alchemy: Poems from the Sufi Tradition* (Noveto: New World Library, 2006), xviii-xix

⁹ Mahera M. Harouny, “The Concepts of Love and the Beloved in the Ghazal of Sadi and Hafiz,” PhD diss., (Utah University, 1998), 141.

Like the candle, standing I am: me of the fire, affright not. ¹⁰

Hafiz was no different than the other poets of his generation as regards the themes of love in his ghazals. What distinguished him from the others was his outstanding use of words. With less words, he could tell more. He devoted himself to his Beloved and endured all difficulties on his path. Hafiz was confident that the power of love would erase all man-created status. In his understanding, king and beggar did not differ in the realm of love. Love also had enriching aspect, which would make life meaningful. "On the sacred level, love is the God within, and the ignorant are those who deny this fact. On the profane level, love is an essential part of life and survival without it is hell on earth."

In the way of love, there is no distinction between the rich and the poor

O king of love, speak with the beggar. ¹¹

Compared to Hafiz, Rumi believed that the Beloved was in everything and accordingly his love covered everything.

If I mention his love, the beloved become angry.

But you don't become a tactless lover,

Never turn your face from him, never.

The bitterness of the beautiful one

Resembles the bitterness of wine;

It will go along with the taste of man

He gives him joy, but makes his mouth bitter.

To die in front of Him is sweeter than sugar.

The only one who has died.

¹⁰ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. I, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: Ibex Publication, 2007), 712.

¹¹ Harouny, "The Concepts of Love and the Beloved in the Ghazal of Sadi and Hafiz," 142.

*Don't ask live ones.
How happy a day is that day
When I will give my soul while prostrate
The presence of love.
Read this ghazal.
Love asked the bird of soul,
"Do you want to get in the cage?"
The bird said, "Never mind the cage,
Break it up, all I want is you."¹²*

Due to his calculated words that usually carried double meanings, Hafiz was often criticized as a "pleasure-loving earthly poet" and at the same time praised as "gnostic." He internalized the Beloved and claimed some characters of the Beloved in himself. He was conscious of himself and did not let himself get annihilated. He preferred a Beloved who reacted to his love. He did not seek one sided, passive love affair.¹³

*At the head of thy street, we played our head like a ball:
None knew saying: "This ball what is? This street what is?"¹⁴*

Hafiz was a free spirit, therefore ignored the limitations imposed by love. He was in love but was not lost in it.¹⁵ He was aware of the thorns of love. He suffered yet never gave up.

Rumi, instead, humanized his love in the person of Shams.

O Shams Tabriz, I am so drunken in this world,

¹² Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, *Divan-i Kebir Meter 8b: Bahr-i Remil*, trans. Nevit Ergin (Gaylord, Michigan: Echo Publications, 1999),54.

¹³ Harouny, "The Concepts of Love and the Beloved in the Ghazal of Sadi and Hafiz," 144-145.

¹⁴ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. I, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: Ibex Publication, 2007), 79.

¹⁵ Harouny, "The Concepts of Love and the Beloved in the Ghazal of Sadi and Hafiz," 168.

*That except of drunkenness and revelry I have no tale to tell.*¹⁶

At the same time, he also attempted to go beyond physical level.

My body is like the moon, which is melting for love,

*My heart is like Zuhra's lute—may its strings be broken*¹⁷

Rumi maintained that God is the One and He encompasses all. Man can be a part of the One through heart, which constitutes the centre of man's consciousness. Rumi believed that the ideal world could only be constructed on the basis of the physical world. He continually detected reflections of the ideal world in the physical one. He embraced the ideal world and turned himself into a bridge to reach the Beloved.¹⁸ Rumi acted in this manner, because he was a lover and he desired to be united with his Beloved. He saw ideal world in the physical one and aspired to reach there.

Open your eyes, see the soul

That have escaped from their bodies.

Soul broke the cage

And heart escaped from the body.

See hundreds of minds, associate with Souls.

Watch thousands of beings escape

From themselves to themselves.

I don't bother, even if a hundred thousand

Soul and hearts run away from me,

¹⁶ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz* (Bethesda: Ibex, 2001), 127.

¹⁷ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz* (London: Routledge, 2013), 19.

¹⁸ Ghulam Muhammad Fayez, "A Mystic Ideas and Images in Jalal al-Din Rumi and Walt Whitman," PhD diss. (Arizona University, 1978), p.95

Because I know they will all come back

Like a drunk with a smile.

A hundred thousand thirsty ones

Died of theirs.

The nightingale escaped from the garden

To that side.¹⁹

Hafiz saw freedom in love and slavery at the same time. He was happy and sorrowful.

Openly, I speak; and of my own utterance, heart-happy am I:

Love's slave, I am; and of both worlds, free am I.²⁰

Rumi speaks about the suffering and highlights the significance of being brave for the lover.

O Brother, you must suffer. In order to be a lover.

In order to stay on line, to become truth, One must be brave. Where is brave?²¹

Likewise, Hafiz portrayed the lover's venture to attain the Beloved as heroic. Lover abandons comforts of life and endures great agony in the process. It is a proof of *loyalty*, which is awarded with the unity with the Beloved. The more the love is, the more is the suffering of the lover.²²

*Love's pain, O have endured to such a degree-that ask not Separation's poison,
I have tasted in such a way- that ask not*

In the world I have wandered; (and its good and bad its heat and cold

¹⁹ Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, *Divan-i Kebir Meter 8b: Bahr-i Remil*, trans. Nevit Ergin (Gaylord, Michigan: Echo Publications, 1999), 136.

²⁰ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. I, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: Ibex Publication, 2007), 703.

²¹ Mevlana Jalaluddin, *Rumi Divan-i Kebir Meter 8b: Bahr-i Remil*, Trans. Nevit Ergin (Gaylord, Michigan: Echo Publications, 1999), 115.

²² Harouny, "The Concepts of Love and the Beloved in the Ghazal of Sadi and Hafiz," 165.

experienced) and at the end of work, A heart - ravisher (the true Beloved) I have chosen so peerless- that ask not .

In the desire of the dust of His door, in that way, Goeth the water (tears) of my eye- that ask not .

Last night, from His mouth, with my ear, Words, I heard such- that ask not.

Towards me, wherefore bitest thou thy lip, saying: Speak not, A ruby lip, I have bitten (kissed) such- that ask not.

In the hut of my own beggary, without thee, sorrows, I have endured such- that ask not.

In the path of love, like Hafiz the stranger, At a stage (of trouble), I have arrived such- that ask not.²³

Oath of Loyalty to the Beloved

The similarity between the two verses that are central to this paper are clear. Nevertheless, we need to break down the lyrics here for a deeper understanding. There are two words used in these verses that need attention: *oath* and *beloved*. *Oath* is significant, but it only makes sense with reference to the one it is taken to. For this, this paper highlights *beloved* and the *love* for him. *Beloved* has been one of the most frequently used words for creating literary masterpieces in Persian poetry. Persian poets, by using this word and its semantic field have left us a great heritage of literary works. Rumi, for example, used the word *beloved* 115 times in his Divan. Hafiz on the other hand used it 42 times in his ghazals. While using the same word, did they mean the same thing?

With reference to some of the verses cited here and his general writing, it is fair to claim that literally Hafiz used *beloved* with connection to the earth, while Rumi's articulation of it was mystical and divine. Rumi's love can be explained within the context of Surah Al Imran in which Allah addresses Prophet Mohammed (SAV): "Say to people if you love Allah follow me and

²³ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. I, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: Ibex Publication, 2007), 543.

Allah will love you.” This was the meaning of love for Rumi. Throughout his Divan, we can observe that Rumi followed his *beloved* casually and while the path was not easy for him, he never gave up. Because he believed that in this path, he would become a better person. And he was sure that the *beloved* could see him. So, he never felt lonely. And, he enjoyed the venture. The path turned joyous and sweet.

Rumi was not surprised about the difficulties he faced. He was prepared and abandoned everything. Hafiz was different. He was taking well care of himself. He was writing neatly and revising his texts. Rumi on the other hand did not even write down most of his poems himself. Hafiz was the man of beauty. Rumi detached himself from physical reality.

Rumi from beginning was aware of the hardship in his path. The path of love for him was like water. Why water? Because this path cooled down his pain and he suffered less. Besides, water was pure and quenched his thirst. It added to his mysticism and enriched him. His desire was to reach the fire and the fire was the *beloved*.

For Hafiz, on the other hand, the path was too difficult, and he kept complaining about it. The path was too much of a burden on him. He, at times, confessed his vulnerability before God and sharply criticized contradictions of life. Nonetheless, Hafiz’s belief in God was strong and consistent. He would eventually reach to the end of the road that made him agonize.

On account of that heart- cherishing beloved, thanks with complaint are mine:

If thou be a subtlety-understander of love list well to this tale.

Rewardless was and thankless- every service that rendered: O Lord! Void of kindness let none be served on (master).

To profligates, thirsty of lip. None giveth (even) a little water:

You may say: “Those recognizing holy men have departed from this land.”

Heart! In his tress-like noose, twist not; (and from its fancy come out) for there,

*You see severed head, crimeless, guiltless.*²⁴

While Rumi was enjoying the path, Hafiz got constantly wounded. He wanted to reach to the beloved with the expectation that his *beloved* would cure all his wounds.

Both Rumi and Hafiz got purified on their paths to their beloved by going through different experiences. Rumi's purification on the path to reach his *beloved* is vividly expressed by himself in the following ghazal:

I was dead, I became alive; I was weeping, I became laughing; the power of love came, and I became everlasting power.

My eye is satiated, my soul is bold, I have the heart of a lion, I have become shining Venus.

He said, "You are not mad, you are not appropriate to this house"; I went and became mad, I became bound in shackles.

He said, "You are not intoxicated; go, for you belong not to this party"; I went and became intoxicated, I became overflowing with joy.

He said, "You are not slain, you are not drenched in joy"; before his life-giving face I became slain and cast down.

He said, "You are a clever little man, drunk with fancy and doubt"; I became a fool, I became straightened, I became pucked up out of all.

He said, "You have become a candle, the qibla of this assembly"; I am not of assembly, I am not candle, I have become scattered smoke.

He said, "You are shaikh and headman, you are leader and guide"; I am not shaikh, I am not leader, I have become slave to your command.

He said, "You have pinions and wings, I will not give you wings and pinions"; in desire for his pinions and wings I became wingless and impotent.

...

²⁴ *The Divan of Hafiz Shiraz*, vol. I, trans. Henry Wilberforce Clarke (Bethesda: IbeX Publication, 2007), 191.

I was Venus, I became the moon, I became the two hundred- fold sky; I was Joseph, henceforth I have become the waxing Joseph.

Famous moon, I am yours, look upon me and yourself, for from the trace of your smile I have become a smiling rose garden.

Move silently like a chessman, yourself all tongue, for through the face of the king of the world I have become happy and blissful.*²⁵

This ghazal is about annihilation, which is equal to eternity and immortality. The *lover* at this stage is free from himself. He passes through the valley of selflessness and the greatness, and the *beloved's* beauty makes the *lover* intoxicated in such a way that the *lover* annihilates.

There is a Sufi saying that nothing is possible in love without death. Sufis call the process of dying to oneself, annihilation. In the fire of love, we are burnt, and through this burning the ego learns to surrender, to die to its own notion of supremacy. *Lover* learns to give himself totally to her *beloved* without thought or care for himself until we can say "*Beloved* is living; *lover* is dead". In this ultimate love affair, we die to ourselves.

Annemarie Schimmel points out to the same perception of the interaction between the lover and the beloved:

Lover and beloved are like two mirrors which gaze into each other; but the secret of this relation can never be explained by rational thought. They experience a higher unity, a comprehensive love which is incomparable and indescribable: for the lover who has completely purified his heart's mirror, or who has matured by endless suffering, eventually feels, not as the expression of a philosophical truth, but as a personal experience that everything is the *beloved*, and the *lover* is a veil. Living is the *beloved*, and the *lover* dead.²⁶

Rumi famously summed up his life by saying that he "*burnt, and burnt,*

²⁵ Arthur John Arberry, *Mystical Poems of Rumi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 142.

²⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 352.

*and burnt.*²⁷

This paper maintains that the same holds true for Hafiz. The two poets engaged in the same Sufi spirituality in their writings with their distinct understandings. In his writings, Rumi uninterruptedly underlined the importance of connection with the Beloved. He raised the same point over and over with different stories. Rumi articulated the pain that union required and attempted to show that man is assisted by God to reach “a higher state”, where selflessness prevail.

Disappearing in the world of disappearances is my religion,

*Non-existing in the world of existence is my creed.*²⁸

Conclusion

The two verses that are central to this paper are similar. Both Rumi and Hafiz took an oath to their *beloved*. Both of them were ready to sacrifice whatever they had, but in different ways. Hafiz cries. *Beloved's* lovers would be his *beloved*. So, he would serve the *beloved* of his *beloved*. He was happy to reach to his *beloved* through his *beloveds*. He was sad over the endless separation.

On the other hand, Rumi explained the path in his verse and referred to it as joyous. “I have this way and joy will be with me”, he uttered. He made an oath that his *beloved* would be his soul. He did not have any doubt. He was very confident. Because he was this much confident, he was content. He was confident that even he could not reach the *beloved* he would be happy to be on the path. He was sure that his *beloved* would love him. The two distinguished poets got purified in the process through different ways. This resembles Aristotelian catharsis. They suffered but never gave up.

In the final analysis, this paper argues that Rumi and Hafiz perceived

²⁷ Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, 24.

²⁸ Mostafa Vaziri, *Rumi and Shams' Silent Rebellion: Parallels with Vedanta, Buddhism, and Shai-vism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 114.

loyalty in similar terms. On the other hand, considering Rumi's spiritual framework and the mundane approach Hafiz adopted in his works, this paper also claims that *loyalty* was portrayed rather differently by the two poets.

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