

Jefferson Quick, Timely Reads

Poetry of Hafiz Resonates More Than 600 Years Later

By: Reverend Charles Brock
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Shams-ud-din Muhammad, or more commonly known as Hafiz (about 1320-1390), was a Persian Sufi master, poet, and mystic. It is estimated he wrote around 5,000 poems, but only up to 700 survive. His work is known largely because of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Ralph Waldo Emerson who translated him into English. As Annemarie Schimmel writes, "Persian poetry – from its very beginning conductive to precious, gemlike images – was the ideal vehicle to express these feelings [of mysticism]. The subtle harmony and ultimate equilibrium between the different spheres of being is best maintained in the poetry of Hafiz, whose verses are the perfect flower of the gardens of Shiraz, transparent as the air of that town, and fragrant as rose oil distilled from the centuries-old tradition of love and the divine revealed in visible forms." [1]

The best way to explain Hafiz is to read his poems. They have levels of meaning – secular and sacred – for the reader to explore. Too much explanation is an assassin of the soul.

“The
Earth would die
If the sun stopped kissing her.”

“God said
I am made whole by your life.
Each soul, each soul
Completes Me.”

“This is the kind of Friend
You are -
Without making me realize
My soul’s anguished history,
You slip into my house at night,
And while I am sleeping,
You silently carry off
All my suffering and sordid past
In Your beautiful
Hands.”

“The heart is a
Thousand-stringed instrument
That can only be tuned with
Love.”

“Lovers
Don’t tell all of their
Secrets.
They might
Count each other’s moles
That reside in the shy
Regions,
Then keep that tally strictly

To themselves.
God and I
Have signed a contract
To be even more intimate than
That!
Though a clause
Mentions
Something about not drawing detailed maps
To all His beautiful
Laughing
Moles.”

“Let us be like
Two falling stars in the day sky.
Let no one know of our sublime beauty
As we hold hands with God
And burn
Into a sacred existence that defies -
That surpasses
Every description of ecstasy
And love.” [\[2\]](#)

“Let’s get loose with
Compassion,
Let’s drown in the delicious
Ambience of
Love.”

“Slipping
On my shoes,
Boiling water,
Toasting bread,
Buttering the sky:
That should be enough contact
With God in one day
To make anyone
Crazy.”

“What would
Happen if God leaned down
And gave you a full wet
Kiss?
Hafiz
Doesn't mind answering astronomical questions
Like that:
You would surely start
Reciting all day, inebriated,
Rogue-poems
Like
This.”

“Where is the door to God?
In the sound of a barking dog.
In the ring of a hammer.
In a drop of rain.
In the face of
Everyone
I see.”[\[3\]](#)

“Everyone
Is God speaking.
Why not be polite and
Listen to
Him?”[\[4\]](#)

“If God
Invited you to a party
And said,
'Everyone
In the ballroom tonight
Will be my special Guest,'
How would you then treat them
When you arrived?
Indeed, indeed!
And Hafiz knows

There is no one in this world
Who
Is not upon
His Jeweled Dance
Floor.”

“No one in need of love
Can sit with my verse
For an hour
And then walk away without carrying
Golden tools,
And feeling that God
Just came
Near.”[\[5\]](#)

“Sometimes love tastes like this:
The pain is so sweet
I beg God,
‘May I never open my eyes again
And know another image
Than what I have
Just seen.
May I never know
Another feeling other than your
Inconceivable
Immaculate
Touch.
Why not
Let Hafiz die
In this blessed Ruin?’”[\[6\]](#)

“Every child
Has known God,
Not the God of names,
Not the God of don’ts.
Not the God who ever does
Anything weird,
But the God who only knows four words

And keeps repeating them, saying:
'Come dance with Me.'
Come
Dance." [7]

Hafiz sees God in the other, in himself, and in the heavens. He claims love is the key to mysticism. But he is a religious tease – we must work out the theology and practicalities ourselves. It is a bit like Jesus who gives us parables for us to interpret.

He did not have much time for justice in society as do many of the other mystics, but his poetry is so astounding it cannot be ignored.

He was a Muslim mystic in the Sufi tradition. He was unusual in that he claimed we influence God. "Each soul completes Me," he wrote. There are hundreds of other poets from the same fonts in Persia and worth looking at if one would contemplate the marvels of the mystical traditions.

Hafiz was ecumenical, and his poems can be used by all. A poem to end will show that:

"I am
A hole in a flute
That the Christ's breath moves through –
Listen to this
Music.
I am the concert
From the mouth of every
Creature
Singing with the myriad
Chords." [8]



Citations:

[1] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, North Carolina University Press, Chapel Hill 1975, p 309

[2] All poems not otherwise listed are from [//www.astrodreamadvisor.com/Hafiz.html](http://www.astrodreamadvisor.com/Hafiz.html)

[3] Daniel Ladinsky (trans), *The Gift*, Poems by Hafiz, Penguin, 1999, p 222

[4] Ibid p 269

[5] Ibid p 47, 33

[6] Ibid p 317

[7] Ibid p 270

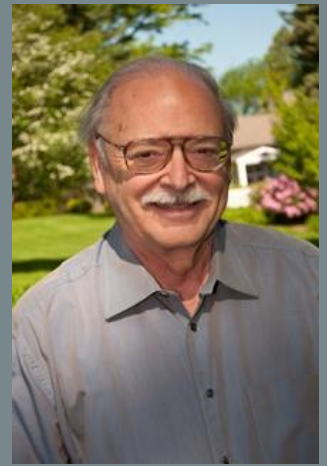
[8] Ibid p 203

<https://www.pinterest.com/poeticpaint/hafiz/>

Quotesgram.com

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