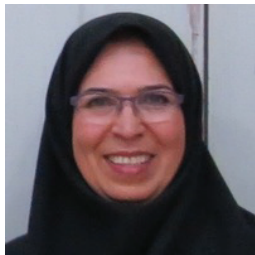




## Sagacious Thought and Brahmin's opinion

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As mentioned in the previous article, one of the main reasons for the general popularity of Hafiz's poetry is the special attention he gives to the ethical and righteous foundations of Iranian people, which has been going on in the culture and thought of Iranian and Persian-speaking people since ancient times. In the previous article, one of the three teachings that Zarathustra proposed for the good of the people was referred to as the doctrine of "good words" and its reflection in Hafiz's poetry. In the present article, the concept of "good thoughts", closely related to "good deeds" is elaborated in the context of Hafiz's words.

The concept of "good thoughts" has been expressed by Hafiz with the terms "correct thought"<sup>1</sup> and "reasonable thought"<sup>2</sup>. In Dekhoda, the meaning of "thought" is considered to be the same as 'thinking' which means "conscious activity of the mind to find something". By choosing the two adjectives "correct" and "reasonable" for thought, Hafiz uses precisely the same meaning for thought, the "conscious activity" of the mind. The word 'thought' and other similar words, such as thinking, wisdom, reflection, imagination, judgement, conscience, prudence, intention, melancholy are commonly found in Hafiz's poetry.

However, in one single *ghazal*, for instance, Hafiz has taken a different approach, paying

attention to several manifestations of the concept of thinking or thought, as shown in the following *ghazal*, beginning with:

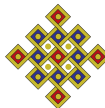
Two sprightly friends, two *mans*'<sup>3</sup>  
moreover of wine that has long been  
stored. /A leisure hour, a page to muse on,  
a nook on the verdant sward<sup>(1)</sup>

In this *ghazal*, different manifestations of thinking, in a very general sense of good thoughts, have been presented. However, the context of the *ghazal* helps the reader to discover various meanings of "good thoughts". Here, good thinking is so important to Hafiz that the poet implicitly appeals to the wise men to change the unfavorable ambience, described in the *ghazal*, to a favorable one. In the opening stanza of this *ghazal*, for instance, Hafiz clearly refers to a scaring and odd situation, describing a threatening time, so fearsome that he is looking for a place to take refuge. He feels relieved if he can only relax himself by sitting on the grass. Most Hafiz scholars assume that the composition of this *ghazal* was because of Timur, the vicious conqueror, who invaded Shiraz. It is noticed that whenever Hafiz falls on hard time (political, emotional, mystical distress (*Qabz*)), he first turns to love, then to his beloved, and last to the wine, butler or sometimes to the music and musicians, as observed below:

If, the heart's grief from our memory, the  
cup do not/The foundation of our work,  
the anxiety of the vicissitudes will<sup>(2)</sup>

However, in the opening of the *ghazal* under discussion, Hafiz, instead of butler (*Saqi Golrokh*) and ornate wine glass (*Jam-e-Marsa*) and the beautiful beloved, asks for

3 "Man" is the measuring scale which equals to 3 kilograms.



the companionship of two friends who are described as shrewd and clever. Here, the poet longs the presence of two friends. This implies that he is after spending some time with two friends, not the beloved. Also, instead of delicate and ornate cups, he asks for wine in large volume (*do (2) mans*), implying drinking wine in a friendly condition with no formalities. Furthermore, he likes to sit and drink with them on the grass, not in a tavern, and not listening to the music or enjoying watching the dancer. Finally, instead of any means of comfort and enjoyment, he asks for a book (probably, a book of poetry). The bizarre combination of these elements, namely, book, clever friends, etc., astonishes the reader<sup>4</sup>. With the employment of the minimum words possible and maximum ambiguity, the poet attempts to show an ominous incident, an incident so terrible that he metaphorically describes it as “the turmoil of incidence”. The point to consider is that after all bad happenings in chaotic times, perhaps with the intention of compensating all those ruins, at the end of the lyric, Hafiz turns to the wise man or *Hakim*<sup>5</sup> again, as observed in the following stanza:

The vigour of the age, O HAFIZ is crushed  
by this heavy woe;/ Can the physician's art  
avail us, or all that the Brahmins know?<sup>(3)</sup>

Having reflected on this stanza, the reader might astonish that the poet, instead of seeking help from the usual helpers: love, the beloved, wine and butler, and instead of seeking help from God or asking for help from the true believers, has turned to the sage and Brahmin's reasoning and wisdom. It should be noted that Hafiz, in addition to believing in God's help and the efforts and prayers of the mystic (the *Pir*) (whose approval and positive approach, according to Hafiz, would solves

all problems), sometimes considers his own efforts and prayers effective.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, in the face of hard time, poverty and solitude of dark nights, Hafiz's weapon is usually to resort to the night and dawn cry, the prayers and reading Qur'an, the effort of Hafiz himself, the blessing of the dawn prayer, the will of the *Pir* and the sigh of the oppressed. But in this special *ghazal*, which is perhaps the toughest time he has faced during his lifetime, he has sought help from the thinker. Perhaps it can be said that Hafiz considers love as his only helper at the time of personal turmoil, but in facing more serious hardships and public sufferings and pain, Hafiz holds on to the logical thought arising from wisdom and knowledge, and considers wise reasoning as the only way to salvation. And this might best be interpreted as “good thoughts”. In this case, perhaps Hafiz's unambiguous use of the word “Brahmin”, which is semantically equivalent to sage, vividly manifests the long presence of the wisdom of the ancient sages. The poet, facing life's turmoil which is so hard that nobody and nothing can be the savior, turns to the wise for help. This is the best example of the status of “good thoughts”, in Hafiz's mindset, as the only way to salvation.

#### Notes:

- ۱- دو یار زیرک و از باده کهن دومی / فراغتی و کتابی و گوشه چمنی
- ۲- اگر نه باده غم دل زیاد ما ببرد / نهیب حادثه بنیاد ما ز
- ۳- مزاج دهر تبه شد در این بلا حافظ / کجاست فکر حکیمی  
و رای برهمنی

#### Reference

Salami, Ismail (compiler & translator) (2005). *The Divan of Hafiz*. Tehran: Forough Danesh.

4 For this reason, some commentators have doubted the inclusion of the word clever in this *ghazal* and have considered it as a delicate replacement for the word 'slender friend', implying the beloved. This interpretation has a number of semantic problems, which is beyond the scope of this article. This might suffice to indicate that asking for a clever friend and book in this poem is a kind of norm-breaking in traditional lyrics.

5 *Hakim* here refers to a physician who is a wise philosopher, as well.

6 In his poems, he has threatened the oppressors and tyrants several times that his deep sigh would badly affect them. Plus, once he has claimed that the will of Hafiz is man's savior of the worldly grief:

I was HAFIZ, divinely inspired that I attained such height/ It  
was God's mercy that time's sorrow for me waived

