



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Study of true Love in the Poetry of Rahman BaBa and Hafiz Sherazi

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a critical and comparative exploration of the concept of love (true love) in the poetry of Rahman Baba and Hafez of Shirazi. Love stands as a central and foundational theme in Islamic mysticism and classical literature, endowing both poets with a distinct intellectual vision and artistic sensibility. The study begins by examining the lexical and technical meanings of love, its literal and metaphorical dimensions, and its conceptual foundations within the framework of Sufi thought. It then proceeds to present separate analytical readings of the poetic works of Hafez and Rahman Baba. The findings indicate that Hafez articulates love in a libertine (*rendāna*), highly symbolic, and multilayered manner, employing motifs such as the tavern, the cupbearer, and wine to convey profound mystical and philosophical insights. By contrast, Rahman Baba expresses love in a lucid, spiritually infused, and ethically grounded language, portraying it as a means of self-refinement, humility, and union with the Divine. Although both poets conceive of love as the fountainhead of spiritual perfection and regard the worldly realm as transient and unstable, they differ markedly in stylistic expression, intellectual inclination, and social vision. Despite their shared mystical foundation, the literary style, linguistic structure, and philosophical orientation of Hafez and Rahman Baba vividly demonstrate the diversity and artistic depth of classical Persian and Pashto literature.

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Introduction

Rahman BaBa, son of Abdul-Sattar, is the celebrated luminary of the Pashto language and literature to whom the Pashtun people have attributed honorific titles comparable to those earned in Persian by Hafiz Sherazi, such as Lisan al-Ghayb (The Tongue of the Unseen), Bulbul-e Hazār Dastan (The Nightingale of a Thousand Tales), and other epithets of reverence. The Diwans(poems) of both poets are traditionally used for bibliomancy (faal), and are held in deep esteem and trust by their admirers. Their collections are found in nearly every household, cherished with profound affection and devotion. Their verses circulate widely, recited from pulpits, echoed in women's gatherings, and sung in the pastoral melodies of shepherds.

Love (truelove) stands among the most profound and transformative emotions of human existence, occupying a distinguished position in literature, particularly in the works of classical poets. In Islamic and mystical traditions, love is not merely an emotional inclination; rather, it is regarded as the path to spiritual perfection, the purification of the self, and union with the Divine. The two great poets of Pashto and Persian literature, Rahman Baba and Hafez of Shiraz, each shaped a distinctive vision of love in accordance with their intellectual temperaments and cultural milieus.

This article seeks to examine the concept of love in the poetry of both poets, to illuminate their convergences and divergences, and to clarify the spiritual, philosophical, and social meanings that love conveys within their verse.

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The methodology of this study is analytical and comparative: first, the characteristics of love in the work of each poet will be explored independently; thereafter, a comparative evaluation will be undertaken.

Statement of the Problem

True love (ishq) occupies a central and foundational position in both Persian and Pashto Sufi and lyrical literature. Hafiz Shirazi and Rahman BaBa stand among the two masters of Eastern literature who accorded love a distinguished status in their poetry, exploring it through mystical, ethical, and humanistic perspectives.

Although both poets appear to have been shaped by the intellectual climate of Sufism, similarities and differences emerge in their interpretation of love, their language, symbolic systems, artistic imagery, and intellectual orientation. Hafez frequently articulates love through the symbolic lexicon of libertinism (rendi), the tavern, the cupbearer, and wine; whereas Rahman Baba presents love in a lucid and direct manner, grounded in asceticism, sincerity, humility, and devotion to the Divine.

While numerous studies have been devoted separately to the poetry of Hafez and Rahman Baba, comparatively few have undertaken a systematic and scholarly analytical comparison of their conceptions of love. This gap necessitates a structured comparative inquiry into the notion of love in their works, examining its forms (literal and metaphorical), symbolic dimensions, mystical worldview, and intellectual depth.

The central research question, therefore, is as follows: Does the concept of love in the poetry of Hafez of Shiraz and Rahman Baba share an identical mystical essence, or does it differ in terms of expression, interpretation, and intellectual orientation? If differences exist, to what extent are they shaped by distinct intellectual, cultural, and historical contexts?

Through close textual analysis, this study seeks to illuminate both the convergences and divergences in their treatment of love and to present a clearer picture of the interrelationship between Persian and Pashto mystical thought within the broader landscape of classical Eastern literature.

Research Objective

The principal and central objective of this study is to examine the concept of true love (ishq) in the poetry of Rahman BaBa and Hafiz Sherazi.

Research Questions

1. Do the concepts of love in the poetry of Hafez Shirazi and Rahman Baba possess the same degree and meaning?
2. Are there notable differences in their interpretation and expression?

Literature Review

The theme of love and affection is one of the fundamental concepts of Eastern mystical literature and has attracted the attention of numerous scholars. Various literary and mystical studies have been conducted on Hafez Shirazi and Rahman Baba; however, a comparative study of the concept of love between these two poets has largely remained limited. In Persian and Pashto literature, the field of comparative literature is relatively new. Although general comparative studies have been written about Eastern poets, a systematic and in-depth comparative analysis of the concept of love and affection between Hafez and Rahman Baba is rarely found. Nevertheless, the concept of love in the poetry of each poet has, to some extent, been studied separately.

For example, Abdulbaqi Hilaman, in his book *The Mysticism of Abdul Rahman Baba*, states that Rahman Baba emphasizes attaining the pleasure and satisfaction of Almighty God and recognizing sincerity in worship. According to him, sincere and practical knowledge represents the path of *Sharia* and *Tariqa*, while divine love and affection serve as the means of reaching the ultimate spiritual goal (Hilaman, 2011, p. 47).

Similarly, Morteza Motahhari, in *The Mysticism of Hafez*, argues that Hafez's concept of love is not merely metaphorical or worldly; rather, it is divine and sacred, directing human beings toward sincere worship of Allah and drawing them closer to the illumination of divine light (Motahhari, 1994, p. 17).

Ziwaruddin Ziwar, in *History of Pashto Literature: The Middle or Classic Period*, describes Rahman Baba as a mystical poet whose poetry offers valuable guidance for life. According to Ziwar, Rahman Baba's poetry generally encompasses themes of love, mysticism, social issues, and ethics (Ziwar, 2007, p. 247).

From the above examples, it is evident that many studies merely refer to the mystical inclinations of these poets without providing a systematic scholarly analysis of their conceptual, symbolic, linguistic, and intellectual differences. This gap highlights the necessity of the present

research. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the concept of love and affection in the poetry of both poets through a comparative critical approach and to clarify the intellectual connections and differences between these two Eastern literary traditions.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a library-based (documentary) research approach. The data and research materials have been collected from authoritative books, scholarly articles, and other relevant academic sources. These materials were carefully reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized to construct the theoretical and analytical foundation of the study.

The research is qualitative in nature and is conducted using an analytical comparative method. Data were gathered through documentary research techniques, and through textual and conceptual analysis, the notion of love in the poetry of Hafez Shirazi and Rahman Baba is comparatively examined and critically evaluated. Selected poems from both poets serve as the primary texts for analysis, while relevant literary and mystical studies constitute the secondary sources.

The analytical procedure involves identifying themes, symbols, and conceptual expressions related to love in the poetic works of both poets. These elements are then compared in terms of their mystical meanings, linguistic expressions, and philosophical implications, in order to highlight similarities and differences between the two poetic traditions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the mystical and comparative literary approach to the concept of love in Eastern Sufi poetry. In this framework, love is understood as a central mystical concept that reflects the relationship between the human soul and the Divine. The study examines love not only as an emotional or romantic theme but also as a spiritual and metaphysical principle that guides the path toward divine realization.

Based on this framework, the analysis focuses on three major dimensions:

1. Mystical Dimension of Love – examining how love is portrayed as a spiritual path leading to closeness with God.
2. Symbolic and Linguistic Expression – analyzing the poetic symbols, metaphors, and imagery used to represent love in the works of the poets.

3. Philosophical and Ethical Perspective – exploring how the concept of love reflects broader ethical teachings and spiritual values within the poetry.

The Concept of Love

In its lexical sense, true love (ishq) denotes intense affection and profound attachment. In mystical terminology, however, true love refers to the spiritual attraction that draws the human being toward almighty God. Sufi thinkers traditionally distinguish between two forms of love: metaphorical love (ishq majazi) and real or divine love (ishq-e haqiqi). Metaphorical love signifies affection for created beings, whereas real love signifies devotion to the Creator, the ultimate fruit of which is annihilation (fanā) in God and subsistence (baqā) through Him. Within Islamic mysticism, love constitutes a fundamental pillar of the spiritual path (sulūk). Through love, the seeker (sālik) transcends the lower self (nafs) and attains the step of gnosis (marifat). This very concept has found expression in classical literature through a rich language of symbols, metaphors, and allegorical imagery.

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Love stands as one of the essential and formative elements of mystical worldviews and movements. Yet what is the true nature of love? Providing a definitive answer to this question is no simple task. Love, like existence itself, appears at once the most evident and universally recognized of realities, and yet its essence and ultimate truth remain concealed within the deepest and subtlest dimensions of being ([Balkhi, 1386, 234p](#)). so much so that it has often been described as a reality simultaneously manifest and hidden, familiar, and ineffable.

Muhayuddin Ibn Arabi, who regarded love as his very religion and faith, states concerning “true love”: “Whoever defines love has not known it; whoever has not tasted even a single drop from its cup has not known it; and whoever says, ‘I have been satiated by that cup,’ has not known it either—for love is a wine that never satiates anyone” ([Ibne Arabi, 1388, 111](#)).

This implies that without personal experience, love cannot be comprehended within the limits of logic, definition, or formal description. Even through individual experience, it is not attained in a single moment. Its path is

infinite; the human being never reaches its ultimate end, and its thirst is never fully quenched.

Rahman BaBa, likewise, regards love as the very foundation and essence of the world.

دا جهان دی خدای له عشقه پیدا کړی د جمله وو مخلوقاتو پلار دی دا
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۵۶)

Characteristics of Love in the Poetry of Hafiz Sherazi

Hafez Shirazi stands among the greatest sonnet (ghazal) poets of Persian literature, and love (ishq) constitutes the central base of his poetic vision. In his verse, love often appears in a libertine (rendana), symbolic, and richly polysemous form. He employs motifs such as the tavern (meykhāneh), the cupbearer (sāqī), wine (sharāb), and the beloved (yar); yet these images rarely retain merely literal meanings. Rather, they are charged with profound mystical and philosophical significance.

In Hafez's poetry, love is not confined to a purely spiritual dimension; it also carries tones of social critique and intellectual freedom. In opposition to the ascetic (zāhid) and the hypocrite (riyakar), he adopts the stance of the libertine, elevating love above outward piety and formalistic devotion. For Hafez, love liberates the human being from the constraints of pretension and hypocrisy, guiding the seeker toward authenticity and inward truth.

Furthermore, the instability of the world and the brevity of life are recurring themes in his sonnets (ghazal). He portrays the worldly realm as transient and perishable, while presenting love as an enduring and eternal value—one that transcends the fleeting nature of temporal existence and opens the path toward spiritual permanence.

الای همنشین دل که یارانت برفت از یاد
مرا روزی مباد آدم که بی یاد تو بنشینم
جهان پیر است و بی بنیاد ازین فرهاد کش فریاد
که کرد افسون و نیرنگش ملول از جان شریتم
جهان فانی و باقی فدای شاهد و ساقی
که سلطانی عالم را طفیل عشق میبینم
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۲۷۷)

These verses by Hafez reflect a deeply mystical and philosophical vision grounded in Sufi metaphysics. The "companion of the heart" symbolizes the Divine Beloved, whose remembrance is equated with true existence; to sit without that remembrance is spiritual death. The lament over the world as "old and without foundation" expresses

the classical Sufi view of the material realm as transient and deceptive, echoing the contrast between appearance and ultimate Reality. The reference to Farhad and Shirin alludes to sacrificial love, suggesting that worldly struggles are but illusions before the higher truth of (Divine Love). In the final line, by declaring the perishing world and even enduring dominion as sacrifices for the "Beloved and the Cupbearer," the poet elevates love above kingship and temporal power, affirming the philosophical idea that sovereignty itself is subordinate to the transformative, eternal reality of love. Here, love is not merely an emotion but the ontological principle through which existence gains meaning and through which the seeker transcends the ephemeral world toward spiritual unity.

Or:

حالی مصلحت وقت در آن میبینم
که کشم رخت به میخانه و خوش بنشینم
جام می گیرم و از اهل ریا دور شوم
یعنی از اهل جهان پاک دلی بگزینم
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۲۷۷)

These verses by Hafez present the tavern not as a literal place of intoxication but as a profound mystical symbol. In Sufi philosophy, the "tavern" (maykhanah) represents the space of spiritual liberation, where social hypocrisy and rigid formalism dissolve. When the poet says he sees wisdom in moving to the tavern, he suggests a conscious withdrawal from worldly pretense toward an inner authenticity. The "wine" signifies divine love and mystical knowledge, an ecstatic awareness that frees the seeker from the (people of hypocrisy), who symbolize ego-driven religiosity and attachment to appearances. Thus, choosing the cup over conformity becomes a philosophical act: it is the rejection of superficial piety in favor of sincerity of heart. The verses ultimately affirm a central Sufi idea that true purity is not found in outward asceticism, but in inward transformation through love, self-annihilation of the ego, and union with the Real.

Characteristics of Love in the Poetry of Rahman BaBa

Rahman BaBa, one of the greatest Sufi poets of Pashto literature, presents the concept of love (ishq) in a simple, fluent, and direct manner. In his poetry, love is predominantly spiritual and ethical. Rahman Baba regards love as a means for the purification of the self (nafs), cultivating humility, and nurturing devotion and surrender to God.

Such as Hafez, the complex symbolic and multilayered expressions are rare in Rahman Baba's verse. He conveys profound mystical insights using the accessible language of the people, employing straightforward vocabulary to communicate deep spiritual truths. According to Rahman Baba, love saves the human being from pride, greed, and worldly attachment, and opens the path toward union with the Divine.

He consistently emphasizes the transience of the world and reminds humanity of the hereafter. In his vision, love is closely linked with ethics and human values, carrying an instructive and reformatory message. As noted by Ustad Ulfat regarding Rahman Baba: "His love was free from all selfishness, and his wine was never from the grape. Without love, he severed all other bonds; without love, he recognized neither flaw nor art. He declared: I am neither Khalil, nor Dawud Zai, nor Mohmand. Consider me only a lover and devoted in love" (Ulfat, 1389, 111).

د دنيا چارې همه واره فاني دي
بارې پورته شه يو بل رنگه حکمت کړه
په طبیب د عاشقانو دارو نه شي
درومه بل خواته دارو د خپل زحمت کړه
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۲۸۵)

These verses by Rahman Baba express a clear mystical and philosophical orientation rooted in Sufi ethics. The declaration that "all the affairs of the world are transient" reflects the metaphysical distinction between the temporal (fani) and the Eternal (baqi), urging the seeker to rise beyond material attachments and adopt a higher, transformative wisdom. The call to "rise" suggests spiritual awakening, a movement from heedlessness toward conscious self-realization. In the second couplet, the claim that no physician can cure the lover signifies that the pain of divine love is not an illness but a sacred state; its remedy cannot come from external means. Instead, the poet advises striving through personal effort (zuhd, struggle, inner discipline), implying that spiritual healing is achieved through self-purification and inward labor. Philosophically, the poem affirms that true wisdom lies in transcending worldly illusion and embracing the purifying suffering of love as the path toward spiritual perfection.

Or:

په هجران کې د یار خیال راسره مل دی په زندان کې د یوسف سره اسیر یم
په خندا کې مې ژړا ده لکه شمع له عالمه پټ پنهان د ځان په ویر یم
آزادي تر دا به هورته بله نشته چې بندي د یار د زلفو په څنڅیر یم
چې همیش په غور نعرې د هجران اورم رحمان څکه د خپل یا ومخ ته څیر یم
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۲۲۰)

These verses by Rahman Baba present separation (hijran) not merely as emotional longing, but as a metaphysical state of the soul distanced from its Divine Origin. The image of being imprisoned with Yusuf evokes the Qur'anic symbol of beauty tested through suffering, suggesting that exile and confinement are stages in spiritual refinement. The paradox of "weeping within laughter like a candle" reflects the Sufi idea that outward composure often conceals inward burning; the candle symbolizes self-consuming love, where illumination for others requires inner sacrifice. Most striking is the line declaring true freedom to be bondage in the Beloved's chain, a profoundly mystical paradox: liberation is achieved not through autonomy, but through surrender. Philosophically, the poem affirms that authentic freedom lies in annihilation of the ego (fana) and constant attentiveness to the Beloved; the cries of separation sharpen awareness, keeping the seeker perpetually oriented toward Divine Presence.

Comparative Levels and Stages of Love in the Poetry of Both Poets

1- The poetry of both Rahman Baba and Hafiz Sherazi is deeply influenced by the intellectual framework of Sufism. In the Sufi path (ṭariqat), the ultimate goal of the Muslim mystic is to attain the pleasure of Almighty God and to draw closer to the divine radiance of His Essence.

The Pashto poet Rahman Baba emphasizes that the pleasure of God is attained through sincere and devoted worship. In acts of devotion, the mystic must remove the garment of hypocrisy and perform worship with complete sincerity, entirely for the sake of God.

کمیڼی هسې کامل کړم چې زه درومم لکه ځمکه درست جهان راسره بیایم
و هرچا و ته به خپل شکل څرگند کړم آئینه غوندي بي رویه بي ریایم
دراز عمر مې حاصل شه له راستیه لکه سروه مدام سبزه تازه پایم
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۲۱۶)

These verses by Rahman Baba express a refined mystical anthropology grounded in humility and spiritual realization. The opening idea of perfecting "lowliness" suggests the Sufi principle that true spiritual elevation arises through self-effacement; by becoming like the earth, humble and receptive, the seeker symbolically "carries the whole world," for the earth sustains all without pride. The metaphor of the mirror reflects the doctrine of self-purification: when the ego is polished of hypocrisy and self-image, one becomes a clear reflector of divine attributes, manifesting to each person according to their capacity. Finally, the wish for long life through

truthfulness, likened to the evergreen cypress, signifies spiritual vitality rooted in sincerity (şidq). Philosophically, the poem teaches that permanence (baqa) is attained not through power or status, but through humility, transparency of heart, and steadfast truth, qualities that align the human soul with the enduring reality of the Divine.

Hafiz says:

در خرابات مغان نور خدا میبینم
این عجب بین که چه نوری ز کجا میبینم
جلوه برمن مه فروش ای ملک الحاج که تو
خانه میبینی و من خانه خدا میبینم
سوز دل اشک روان، آه سحر، ناله شب
این همه از نظر لطف شما میبینم
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۲۷۶)

These verses by Hafez reveal one of the most profound paradoxes of Sufi metaphysics: perceiving divine light in the *kharābāt* (the tavern of the Magians). In mystical symbolism, the “tavern” represents a space beyond rigid orthodoxy, where conventional piety dissolves, and inner truth is unveiled. To see the “Light of God” suggests that the Divine Presence is not confined to formal religious structures but manifests wherever the veil of ego is lifted. The contrast between the outwardly judging pilgrim and the inwardly perceiving mystic reflects the philosophical distinction between appearance (*ẓāhir*) and reality (*bāṭin*): one sees merely a house, the other beholds the House of God. The final lines — tears, burning heart, dawn sighs — portray spiritual suffering as a grace-filled gift; longing itself becomes evidence of divine لطف (subtle grace). Thus, the poem affirms a central Sufi insight: true vision depends not on place but on perception, and the heart refined by love perceives divine radiance even in what the world calls ruin.

2- Love constitutes the central theme in the poetry of both poets. In many Persian and Pashto verses, love is likened to fire. Mawlana Jalalluddin Mohammad Romi famously reflects on this in his life: “I was raw, I ripened, and I burned,” illustrating that the entire movement and dynamism of existence is fueled by the grace and power of love.

از آن به دیبر مغانم عزیز می دارند

که آتشی که نمیرد همیشه در دل ماست

(مطهری، ۱۳۷۷، ۱)

Hafiz says:

در ازل پرتو حُسننت ز تجلی دم زد
عشق پیدا شد و آتش به همه عالم زد
جلوه کرد رُخت دید ملک عشق نداشت
عین آتش شد ازین غیریت بر آدم زد
(مطهری، ۱۳۷۷، ۱۳)

These celebrated verses by Hafez articulate a profoundly metaphysical vision of creation rooted in the Sufi doctrine of divine manifestation (*tajalli*). The opening line situates existence in pre-eternity (*aza*), where a ray of Divine Beauty disclosed itself; from this primordial self-disclosure, love came into being and set the entire cosmos aflame. Here, love is not a human emotion but the ontological principle of creation, the dynamic force through which the Hidden sought to be known.

In the second couplet, when the Divine Face reveals itself, the angel symbol of pure intellect lacks love and thus cannot bear the intensity of this manifestation. The “fire” striking Adam signifies that humanity, unlike the angelic realm, possesses the capacity for passionate love and existential risk. Philosophically, the poem suggests that the human being is distinguished not by reason alone but by the ability to endure and embody divine love. Creation itself is portrayed as the unfolding drama of Beauty revealing itself and Love responding to a cosmic relationship in which the human soul becomes the conscious mirror of that primordial flame.

Khorasani Sufi mystics expressed love in the form of symbolic signs, teaching it through the stages of spiritual journey (*sulūk*) and guiding the seeker toward the inner vision of divine light (*bāṭinī shuhūd*). At times, they likened love to fire, echoing the words of Mawlana Jalalluddin: “Whoever does not possess this fire does not exist.” This fire manifests in spiritual wine, mystical music, and the beauty of the Beloved, serving as a metaphor for the soul’s ecstatic encounter with the Divine.

آتش عشقست کاندن نی فتاد
جوشش عشقست کاندن می فتاد
(امید، ۱۳۹۹، ۱۳)

Rahman BaBa regards love (*ishq*) as the very foundation and essence of the world, whereas Hafiz Sherazi presents it as the ultimate purpose and goal of human life and existence.

Rahman BaBa:

دا دنیا ده خدای له عشقه پیدا کړی
تر عشق غوره بل څه کار په جهان نشته
د جمله و مخلوقاتو پلار دی دا
تر همه کارونو غوره کار دی دا

(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۱۳)

These verses by Rahman Baba express a central metaphysical doctrine of Sufism: that love is the very principle of creation. When the poet says that God created the world through love, he echoes the mystical idea that existence is a manifestation of divine affection and that the cosmos emerged from the desire of the Hidden Treasure to be known. Love here is not sentimental emotion but the creative energy that binds all beings to their Source.

By calling love the “father of all creatures,” the poet elevates it above every other action or pursuit, suggesting that all human endeavors derive meaning only insofar as they participate in this primordial force. Philosophically, the poem affirms that love is both the origin and the purpose of existence; ethically, it implies that the highest human task is to align oneself with this universal principle. Thus, in Rahman Baba’s vision, love is not merely a path among others — it is the supreme vocation of the soul and the noblest work in the world.

Hafiz says:

عکس روی تو چون در آینه جام افتاد
عاشق از خننده می در طمع خام افتاد
حسن روی تو به یک جلوه که در آینه کرد
این همه نقش در آینه اوهمام افتاد
این همه عکس خوش و نقش مخالف که نمود
یک فروغ رخ ساقیست که در جام افتاد
غیرت عشق زبان همه خاصان ببرد
از کجا سر غمش در دهن عام افتاد
آن شد ایخواجه که در صومعه بازم بینی
کار ما با رخ ساقی و لب جام افتاد
(مظہری، ۱۳۷۷، ۳۸)

These verses by Hafez present a sophisticated mystical philosophy based on the theory of reflection and divine beauty. The “face of the Beloved” appearing in the mirror of the wine cup symbolizes the Sufi idea that the world is a manifestation of divine light, where multiplicity is only the illusion of scattered reflections of one Reality. The various forms and images seen in the mirror of imagination represent the human mind’s tendency to perceive separation, while in truth all beauty is a single radiance of the Beloved’s face. The jealousy of love silencing the tongue of the mystics indicates that the deepest experience of divine love cannot be fully expressed in ordinary language, especially not before the unprepared public. The final rejection of the monastery suggests a transition from institutional piety to experiential spirituality, where the seeker’s focus is on the living presence of beauty and ecstatic knowledge symbolized by the cupbearer’s face and the wine of mystical awakening.

3- In the poetry of both poets, the world is portrayed as transient and unstable. Both Hafez of Shiraz and Rahman Baba regard the worldly life as a gateway to the Hereafter, viewing the afterlife as the true purpose of existence. In other words, they emphasize that in this ephemeral world, human beings should conduct all their affairs in accordance with the commands of God, and in harmony with the Shariah of His Great Prophet, peace be upon him.

Rahman BaBa:

د دنیا روزگار همه وبله گولول دی
دا گویمان په هېجا مه کړه چې مې خپل دی
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۳۴۴)

Hafiz:

وقت را غنیمت دان آنقدر که بتوانی
حاصل از حیات ای جان این دمست تا دانی
کام بخشی گردون عمر در عوض دارد
جهد کن که از دولت دار عیش بستانی
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۳۷۱)

4- Both poets regard love (ishq) as a means for the elevation of the soul and the attainment of spiritual perfection.

عاشقی که نورو خلکو ته خواری ده ما موندلی دی دولت په دا خواری کې
و بیمار ته که ناخویش وایی وگړي خویش یم زه د ستا د عشق په بیماری کې
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۴۶۰)

مطلب طاعت و پیمان و صلاح از من مست
که به پیمانہ کشی شهره شدم روز الست
من هماندم که وضو ساختم از چشمه عشق
چار تکبیر زدم یکسره بر هر چه که هست
می بده تا دهمت آگهی از سر قضا
که به روی که شدم عاشق و از بوی که مست
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۱۹)

Differences

1- Style of Expression: Hafez employs a symbolic, allusive, and multilayered language, whereas Rahman Baba uses a simple and direct style. For example, Hafez expresses knowledge of God and sincere, unpretentious devotion to Him in the following manner:

ای دل مباش یکدم خالی ز عشق و مستی
وانگه برو که رستی از نیستی و هستی
گر جان به تن بینی مشغول کار او شو
هر قبله ئی که بینی بهتر ز خود پرستی
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۲۳۹)

These verses by Rahman Baba express the Sufi philosophy of existential transcendence through divine love. The poet advises the heart not to remain empty of love and spiritual ecstasy, because love is the means by which the seeker transcends the duality of non-existence and existence. In mystical thought, true freedom is achieved when the ego dissolves in passionate devotion to the Divine, moving beyond self-centered awareness. The call to avoid self-worship and to orient oneself toward a higher “qibla” symbolizes ethical and spiritual surrender, suggesting that every direction pointing toward truth is superior to narcissistic attachment to the self. Thus, the poem presents love as the path to ontological awakening, where the human soul finds meaning by losing itself in the Absolute.

Rahman BaBa conveys the same idea in a simple, clear, and accessible language, emphasizing straightforward devotion to God without hypocrisy or pretense.

خه عجب بلند مقام دی د اخلاص
چې جهان وایه غلام دی د اخلاص
که له ځمکې و اسمان ته خاته گران دی
دا سفر په یو گام دی د اخلاص
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۱۶۹)

These verses by Rahman Baba exalt the spiritual virtue of (sincerity) as the highest mystical station. The poet portrays sincerity as a sublime existential مقام to which even the world becomes subordinate, suggesting that genuine purity of intention possesses a universal moral and spiritual authority. In the second couplet, the journey from earth to heaven is symbolically reduced to “one step,” indicating that in Sufi philosophy the distance between the human soul and the Divine is not spatial but ethical and spiritual. Thus, true transcendence is achieved not through physical striving but through inner purification, where sincerity becomes the decisive path to metaphysical ascent and union with truth.

2- Libertine vs. Ethical Orientation: Hafez often adopts a libertine stance, occasionally using critical language against the ascetic (zāhid), whereas Rahman Baba favors an instructive and ethical tone, emphasizing guidance, moral reform, and spiritual counsel.

زاهد ظاهر پرست از حال ما آگاه نیست
در حق ما هرچه گوید جای هیچ اکراه نیست
در طریقت هرچه پیش سالک آید خیر اوست
در صراط مستقیم ای دل کسی گمراه نیست
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۵۸)

These verses by Hafez reflect the Sufi critique of superficial religiosity and emphasize the primacy of inner spiritual experience. The “zahide zahirparast” (outwardly devoted ascetic) symbolizes those who focus on external ritual while remaining ignorant of the inner state of the mystic heart. The poet defends the freedom of mystical expression, asserting that judgment based on outward appearance is meaningless in matters of divine truth. In the second couplet, the idea that whatever happens to the spiritual seeker is ultimately good expresses the Sufi doctrine of *taslim* (complete surrender to divine will). The “straight path” is portrayed not as a rigid external route but as an inward journey of sincerity, love, and awareness, where true guidance prevents existential and spiritual deviation. Thus, the poem presents mysticism as a path of inner certainty rather than formalistic morality.

تل به نه وي شگفته گلزار د عمر
نه به جوړ وی همیشه بازار د عمر
لکه سیند د اباسیند په غورځي درومی
هسي یون دی په تلوار تلوار د عمر
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۱۵۶)

These verses by Rahman Baba express the philosophical contemplation of the transience of human life. The poet compares life to a garden that will not remain eternally blooming, and to a marketplace that will not always stay prosperous, emphasizing the impermanence of worldly beauty and material success. The imagery of the river flowing swiftly toward the sea symbolizes the unstoppable passage of time, presenting life as a rapid, irreversible journey. Thus, the poem conveys a classic Sufi ethical message: humans should not become attached to temporal pleasures, because existence itself moves quickly toward its ultimate destination, urging the seeker to focus on spiritual meaning rather than worldly stability.

Or in these verses:

دوباره دې راتلله نشته په دنیا
نن دې وار دی که دروغ کړې که رشتیا
هره چاره چې تر وخت تیره شي عنقا شي
عنقا نه دی په دام نښتی د هېچا
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۱۰۳)

3- Philosophical and Artistic Complexity vs. Popular Simplicity: Hafez’s poetry is characterized by philosophical depth and artistic sophistication, whereas Rahman Baba’s verse embodies popular simplicity and clarity.

In Hafez’s sonnets or ghazals, *ishq* often signifies divine love, that is, the spiritual relationship between human beings and God. Love serves as a means for purifying the soul and detaching oneself from worldly

concerns. Mystical symbols such as wine, the candle, the rose, and the figures of Layla and Majnun function as instruments for experiencing love, rather than merely representing earthly affection. While similar symbols appear in Rahman Baba's poetry, his treatment is marked by simplicity and a colloquial, accessible style, making profound mystical concepts understandable to the general populace.

می ده که گرچه گشتم نامه سیاه عالم
نومید کی توان بود از لطف لایزالی
ساقی بیار جامی وز خلوتم برون کش
تا در بدر بگردم قلاش لایبالسی
از چار چیز مگذر گر عاقلی و زیرک
امن و شراب بیغش معشوق و جای خالی
چون نیست نقش دوران د هیچ حال ثابت
حافظ مکن شکابت تا می خوریم حالی
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۳۶۲)

These verses by Hafez express the Sufi philosophy of hope, existential freedom, and acceptance of the impermanence of worldly conditions. The poet, despite acknowledging the "black record" of worldly sins or mistakes, refuses despair, emphasizing trust in the eternal mercy of the Absolute, a central theme in mystical ethics. The invitation to the cupbearer and the wine symbolizes spiritual intoxication, meaning liberation from social hypocrisy and ego-bound isolation. The advice to avoid four things: fear, impure or artificial pleasure, attachment to a beloved as possession, and existential emptiness reflects a balanced mystical wisdom that combines inner security with authentic joy. The final recognition that the world's forms are constantly changing reinforces the Sufi metaphysical view that reality is dynamic and transient, encouraging the seeker to live in the present moment through love and spiritual awareness. Or as the verses below:

بامدعی مگوئید اسرار عشق و مستی
تا بیخبر بمسیرد در درد خود پرستی
عاشق شو ار نه روزی کار جهان سرآید
ناخوانده نقش مقصود از کارگاه هستی
(حافظ، ۱۳۷۷، ۳۳۹)

Rahman Baba describes the above concept like this:

مدام ناست یم وچ گوگل سترگی به نم کی
عشقی راوینود بحر و بر به خیل حرم کی
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۴۵۶)

These verses by Rahman Baba express the mystical state of perpetual spiritual longing. The image of "sitting

with eyes on the road of the chest box" symbolizes the seeker's continuous expectation of the Beloved, reflecting the Sufi idea that true love is an enduring inner orientation rather than a transient emotion. The second line portrays love as a universalizing force that reveals divine presence across both sea and land, suggesting that the sacred is not confined to a single place but manifests within the heart of the devoted seeker. Philosophically, the poem presents love as a unifying spiritual principle that transforms the entire cosmos into a sanctuary of the Beloved.

Or:

ستا د عشق حرفونه تور نه دي گلگون دي
هم په دا چې نوشته په خيگر خون دي
تش به نشی هغه خم د عشق له میو
چې بی خاورې د فرهاد او د مجنون دي
د دنیا چارې همه واره فانی دي
دا د ستا جور و جفا ولي افزون دی
(رحمان بابا، ۱۳۹۴، ۳۴۷)

3. Comparison of Expression and Style of the Two Poets

Manner of Expression	Hafiz Sherazi	Rahman BaBa
Style of Expression	Profound, multi-layered, imbued with mysticism and philosophical depth	Simple, direct, humanistic, and ethical expression
Love	Sacred and transcendent, functioning as a path toward mystical intoxication and divine knowledge	Mystical and moral themes, and the idea of closeness between God and human beings.
Symbolism	Wine, the candle, the rose, ecstasy, the mystic wine, and the tavern are rich symbolic motifs of classical Sufi poetry.	Flowers, candles, the cloak (symbol of asceticism), nature, fragrance, and similar symbolic elements...
The Philosophy of Poetry	The realization of existence and ultimate reality	Guidance on ethics and the way of life
The language of Poetry	Rich in metaphor and poetic imagery, characterized by complex interpretations and nuanced allusions.	Simple and fluent language that is understandable to ordinary people, with rare and original similes, and other artistic expressions...
The Social Message of Poetry	A critique of hypocrisy and outward religiosity, coupled with an emphasis on inner sincerity, ethical conduct, and adherence to Islamic law (Sharia).	Condemnation of hypocrisy and superficial piety, promotion of sincerity and righteous action, and adherence to Islamic law.

Conclusion

In the poetry of Rahman Baba and Hafez Shirazi, the concept of love (*ishq*) appears as a central element for spiritual perfection and inner development of human beings. The analysis of their poetic works shows that both poets consider love as a path that elevates the human soul above the temporary attractions of the material world and directs it toward spirituality and closeness to the Divine. In this sense, love becomes not only an emotional experience but also a spiritual journey that guides the seeker toward moral and mystical awareness.

At the same time, the study indicates that there are noticeable differences in the way this concept is expressed in their poetry. Hafez often presents love through symbolic, philosophical, and sometimes libertine imagery, using rich metaphors and poetic ambiguity. In contrast, Rahman Baba expresses love in a simpler and more direct language, strongly connected with Sufi teachings and ethical guidance for everyday life. His poetry emphasizes humility, sincerity, and moral purification as essential elements of the path of love.

Despite these stylistic and intellectual differences, both poets share a common mystical foundation in which divine love plays the main role in shaping human spirituality. Their poetic expressions reflect two important

traditions within Eastern mystical literature and demonstrate how the concept of love can be interpreted through different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Therefore, the comparative examination of their works not only highlights the similarities and distinctions between Pashto and Persian literary traditions but also shows the richness and diversity of mystical thought in Eastern poetry. This study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the role of love in classical literature and to encourage further comparative research between the poetic traditions represented by Rahman Baba and Hafez Shirazi.

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