

# From Chalice to Celestial: Unveiling the Wine Symbolism in Classical Persian Literature—From Rudaki to Rumi

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## Abstract

This study explores the cultural and symbolic role of wine in New Persian (Farsi-Dari) literature from the 10th to 15th centuries, focusing on key poets from Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Despite the Islamic prohibition of alcohol introduced in the 7th century, wine retained deep metaphorical resonance in the literary traditions of the region. Through the works of Rudaki (Tajikistan), Manuchehri (Afghanistan/Iran), Khayyam (Iran), Rumi (Afghanistan/Turkey), and Hāfez (Iran), and others this study investigates how poets employed wine as a vehicle to explore existential, emotional, and spiritual themes. Rudaki presents wine as both a moral revealer and a psychological remedy. Manuchehri, writing from the Ghaznavid court, praises wine as a source of resilience and celebration, especially during cultural festivals like Nowruz. In contrast, poets such as Khāqāni (Azerbaijan/Iran) and Anwari (Turkmenistan) treat wine as a form of self-medication, exposing deeper emotional vulnerability and mental distress. Nizami (Azerbaijan) acknowledges wine's soothing properties yet warns of its potential to dull the intellect. Omar Khayyam of Nishapur uses wine as a symbol of philosophical defiance against religious orthodoxy and a call to embrace the fleeting nature of life. Rumi, born in Balkh (Afghanistan) and spiritually shaped by Sanā'ī of Ghazna—who pioneered the integration of Sufi mysticism into Persian verse—redefines wine as a metaphor for divine intoxication, where the tavern (*may-khāna*) becomes a sanctuary of spiritual transformation. Hāfez, writing in Shiraz, masterfully blends sensual and mystical motifs, using wine to reconcile the temporal with the eternal. Through these diverse portrayals, the study reveals how Persian poets negotiated tensions between cultural tradition, religious doctrine, and inner experience. Wine emerges as a powerful literary device for expressing joy, sorrow, rebellion, and transcendence in the broader intellectual landscape of the Persianate world.

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## Keywords

Wine, Persian Poetry, Khayyam, Rumi, Hāfez

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### 1. Introduction

The Avesta, the sacred text of Zoroastrianism and the oldest known Iranian language, was introduced by the prophet Zoroaster, who was born (Tanner, 2002: p. 4) and lived in Balkh around the 10th century BCE (Axworthy, 2008: p. 5; Klima, 1968a: p. 5). The Avesta references early Iranian civilisations along the Helmand River (Haētumant), Lake Hāmūn (Kasoya), and the Oxus River (Amu Darya), with major cultural centres in Balkh, Samarkand, Merv, and Sistan (Klima, 1968a: p. 4). The people were called “Aryā”, and their homeland, spanning Afghanistan, Iran, Sind, and Central Asia, was described as “the land of Aryās” (Ghobar, 1995: p. 37). The term “Aryan,” meaning “noble,” or “faithful” evolved in linguistic studies to describe the broader Indo-European language family, which includes Persian, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Slavic and Germanic languages (Störig, 1990: pp. 33-34).

Cyrus the Great (Kūrush), of the Hakhāmanish tribe, founded the Achaemenid Empire in 546 BCE, establishing Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) as its capital (Axworthy, 2008: p. 12; Arberry, 1953: p. 5; Klima, 1968a: p. 18). Ancient Persian, closely related to Sanskrit and Avestan, was the empire’s administrative language, although Egyptian, Aramaic, and Greek were also in use (Klima, 1968a: p. 19). Following Alexander, the Great’s conquest in 323 BCE, Greek became dominant. By 250 BCE, the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom in Balkh and the Parthian Kingdom in Fars had emerged (Klima, 1968b: p. 26; Arberry, 1953: pp. 390-391).

The Sassanid Empire (226-651 CE), with its capital in Ctesiphon, succeeded the Parthians. Middle Persian (Pahlavi) became its main language (Klima, 1968b: pp. 30-33). After defeats at Qadisiyyah (637) and Nahāvand (641), the Sassanid Empire collapsed in 651 CE, and Arabic became the official language under Islamic rule (Axworthy, 2008: p. 72; Najeebabadi, 2000, Vol. I, pp. 343, 349, 399; Klima, 1968c: pp. 66-67).

By the 9th century, New Persian or Dari emerged, replacing Arabic as a literary and court language, beginning under the Herat-born Tahirid dynasty (821-873 CE) with their capital in Nishapur and further supported by the Samanid dynasty (892-999), founded by Saman Khuda of Balkh (Bosworth, 1967: pp. 101-102; Ghobar, 1995: pp. 86-99; Rypka, 1968: pp. 71-72, 139-140). Early literary figures such as Abu’l Abbās Marwazi, Hanzala Bādghīsī, Abu Hafs Samarkandi, and Shahid Balkhi helped shape New Persian (Rypka, 1968: pp. 112-113; Ghobar, 1995: p. 96).

During the reigns of the Ghaznavids (977-1186) in Ghazni and the Saffārids (867-1495) in Zaranj, in southern Afghanistan, Persian continued to flourish and spread (Ghobar, 1995: p. 96). Persian also became the official and cultural lan-

guage of various Indian Muslim dynasties, including the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1555), the Bengal (1336-1576), the Gujarat Sultanate (1391-1583), the Jawnpur sultanate (1394-1479) and the Mughal Empire (Bosworth, 1967: pp. 181-213).

Renowned for its flexibility and poetic richness, Persian allowed for expressive depth and was widely acclaimed as one of the most melodious and intellectually sophisticated languages in the East (Khan, 1993: p. 138; Arberry, 1953: p. 200). German scholar Annemarie Schimmel regarded Persian literature as the “zenith” of Islamic literary tradition (Graham, 1993: p. vii). Its influence endured from the 10th to the 18th century, solidifying its place as a language of administration, culture, and refined literary expression across Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Indian subcontinent.

Alcohol has been known to the Iranian societies for millennia. However, following the introduction of Islam in the 7th century, alcohol consumption was officially prohibited, as it is considered “*harām*” (forbidden) in Islamic teachings.

The Qur’an explicitly prohibits the consumption of alcohol, classifying it alongside gambling and other practices as sinful and harmful. The verses that address intoxicants highlight both the potential for harm and the temptation they pose to individuals, while also acknowledging that some may perceive benefits. However, the overwhelming focus is on the detrimental effects they have on both the individual and society.

In Surah *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow), the Qur’an acknowledges that wine and gambling may offer some benefits but emphasises that their harm outweighs any potential good:

*“They inquire about intoxicants and gambling. Respond by saying, ‘These activities contain great sin, but they also offer some benefits for people. However, the sin outweighs the benefits.’”* (The Qur’ān, 2010a, II: p. 219).

This verse serves as a clear warning, signalling that while there may be momentary or superficial pleasures or advantages derived from these practices, their negative consequences far outweigh any benefits.

Similarly, Surah *Al-Mā’idah* (The Table) presents a strong condemnation of intoxicants and gambling, labelling them as abominations and products of Satan’s deceit:

*“Oh, you who believe! Intoxicants, gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows are abominations, products of Satan’s deceitful schemes. Therefore, avoid these abominations to ensure your prosperity. Satan’s sole purpose is to sow enmity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, thereby preventing you from remembering Allah and praying. Will you not then abstain from these practices?”* (The Qur’ān, 2010b, V: pp. 90-91).

In Islamic discourse, alcohol is strongly condemned, described as “*um-ul fasād*” or “mother of all corruption” (Dehkhoda, 1998; III: p. 3324) or “*um’ul-khabāes*” (“the mother of all vice”) (Dehkhoda, 1998; IX: p. 14199). and “the deadliest of the deadly sins” (Ghanbari, 2010: p. 441). Scholars have further labelled it “the introduction of the book of debauchery” and “the padlock of the doors of moral-

ity,” arguing that persistent drinking leads to moral decline and social deviance (Al-Fakhoury, 2007: p. 297). Despite this, alcohol consumption persisted in Persianate societies between the 10th and 15th centuries, particularly among intellectuals, rulers, and the elite during a period of socio-economic and cultural flourishing.

Taverns—known as *sharābkhāna*, *maykadah*, or *maykhāna*—were often operated by non-Muslim communities such as Zoroastrians and served as spaces for socialisation, poetry, and philosophical discourse (Safa, 1984: p. 207). In this context, classical Persian literature abounds with references to wine. Common terms include *may* (wine), *mast* (drunk), *sāqhi* (cupbearer), and *shāhed* (beauty), reflecting both the social function and symbolic weight of wine in Persian culture.

Writers used metaphorical language to elevate wine beyond its physical form, transforming it into a symbol of joy, resistance, and spiritual awakening. Expressions such as *Āb-e ātash nomā* (fire-showing water), *Ātash-e toba soz* (repentance-burning water), and *Āftāb-e zard* (yellow sun) suggest emotional release and divine ecstasy (Dehkhoda, 1998; IX: p. 14199). Other metaphors like *Ruh parwar* (soul-nourisher), *Gol-e neshat* (flower of happiness), and *Sang-e mehak* (touchstone) imply that wine served as both an aesthetic and philosophical motif.

Thus, despite formal religious prohibitions, wine in classical Persian literature emerges as a powerful symbol of intellectual freedom, existential reflection, and mystical experience, offering profound insight into the cultural and spiritual life of the Persianate world.

Moreover, a wide variety of wines were produced, each with its own unique character: “*sharāb e arghawānī*” (red wine), “*sharāb-e pokhtā*” (mature wine), “*sharāb-e moqhattar*” (distilled wine), and “*sharāb-e hadīs*” or “*asīr*” (young wine, typically under six months old). Other varieties included “*sharāb-e motaw-wasē*” (middle-aged wine, 6 - 12 months), “*sharāb-e atīq*” (four-year-old wine), and “*sharāb-e kohna*” (old wine). There were also regional and specialized wines, such as “*sharāb-e khāna rasān*” (domestic wine), “*sharāb-e rayhānī*” (aromatic green wine), and “*sharāb-e kahrobāyī*” (yellow wine), along with others like “*sharāb-e sósan*” (lilac wine), “*sharāb-e shakar*” (sugar wine), “*sharāb-e asa*” (honey wine), and “*sharāb-e kadū*” (gourd wine). Not to be overlooked is “*sharāb-e sobh*” (morning wine), consumed during the morning hours (Dehkhoda, 1998; IX: p. 14200).

In this context, wine transcended mere intoxication. It was regarded as a well-spring of creativity, a means of social bonding, and even a conduit for metaphysical enlightenment, reflecting its deep integration into Persian and Persianate intellectual, cultural, and spiritual life.

## 2. Objectives

The aim of this study is to review Persian literature from Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, and neighbouring regions between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a particular focus on the portrayal of wine in the works of influential Persian poets. These writers utilised wine, in both spiritual and literal contexts, reflecting the

complex interplay between culture, religion, and human experience during a time of intellectual and literary flourishing. This examination seeks to explore how wine was both celebrated and condemned in their writings, offering valuable insights into the socio-cultural and philosophical concerns of the era. Through this analysis, we aim to better understand the symbolic roles of wine and intoxication in Persian literary traditions and their deeper significance in the context of Sufism, mysticism, and societal norms.

### 3. Methods

The study employed a qualitative, textual analysis methodology grounded in close readings of primary Persian literary texts. These works were examined in their original language, with particular attention paid to the thematic, symbolic, and contextual functions of wine within various literary, cultural, and theological frameworks.

The corpus for this study was carefully curated to include the writings of prominent classical Persian poets whose contributions are marked by philosophical insight, mystical depth, and enduring cultural significance. Texts were selected based on both their historical-literary importance and their explicit or implicit engagement with motifs such as wine (*sharāb*), intoxication (*mastī*), the tavern (*maykhāna*), and the cupbearer (*sāqī*). The selection process ensured representation from poets associated with diverse literary traditions, including court poetry, philosophical verse, and Sufi mystical writings.

The analytical framework combined literary hermeneutics with historical contextualization to interpret the multifaceted representations of wine. Emphasis was placed on identifying recurrent imagery, tracing intertextual patterns, and mapping the evolution of symbolic meanings across temporal and doctrinal contexts. This approach enabled the differentiation between literal references to wine and its metaphorical deployment in discourses of divine love, existential contemplation, moral ambiguity, and spiritual ecstasy.

The study included works by the following key poets:

- Abu Abdullah Ja'far Rudaki (c. 895-941)
- Abū'l-Qāsim Firdausi (c. 940-1020)
- Abū'l-Najm Ahmad Manuchehri (d. 1040)
- Abū'l-Majd Majdud Sanā'i (c. 1080-1130)
- Abū'l-Fath Omar Khayyam (c. 1047-1123)
- Ilyās ibn Yūsuf Nezami (1141-1209)
- Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī-Rūmī (1207-1273)
- Shams ad-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez (1326-1389)
- Nūr ad-Dīn Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492)

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Wine as Symbol, Salvation and Soulcraft

Abu Abdullah Ja'far Rudaki (c. 895-941 AD, Rudak, Tajikistan), hailed as the “fa-

ther” of Farsi-Dari literature, and the court poet of the King Nasr II bin Ahmad (reigned 864-892) the second ruler of the Samanid empire of Khurasan and Transoxiana (914-943). He versified the ancient Indian collection of animal fables known as *Bidpai*, which was originally gifted to the Sasanian emperor Khusru I Anūsharvān following his annexation of the Kabul Kingdom. The king of Kabul is said to have presented Khusru with the *Panchatantra* (“Five in Five”), a Sanskrit text traditionally attributed to Vishnu Sharma (Naficy, 1965: p. 30). This work, which later became known in Persian as *Kalila wa Dimna*, was translated and adapted into Farsi-Dari by Rudaki (Rypka, 1968: pp. 144-145). Rudaki expounds upon the profound significance of wine in human existence. In his verse “*Wine Reveals a Man’s Honour*”, Rudaki contends that wine serves as a mirror, revealing the true nature of an individual. It distinguishes between virtuous and immoral individuals, exposing their discernment or lack thereof. Moreover, Rudaki praises the hypnotic qualities of wine, describing it as a remedy for insomnia and a cure for sleeplessness: “*Wine, the remedy for sleepless eyes*” (Rudaki, 1997: p. 84).

Abu’l-Najm Ahmad Manuchehri (d. ca. 1041 or 1046) was a highly respected Persian poet, known for his vivid and expressive poetry. He was born either in Dāmghān, in today’s Iran (Thackston, 2000: p. 17; Manuchehri, 1347, p. xxix), or in Balkh, Afghanistan (Manuchehri, 1347, p. xxix). He served at the court of Sultan Mas’ud of Ghazni of Afghanistan (r. 1030-1040) (Thackston, 2000: p. 17; Rypka, 1968: pp. 176-177).

If Rudaki’s wine reveals, Manuchehri’s wine revives. His poetry presents wine as the embodiment of hedonistic resilience: a cure for insomnia, an antidote to worldly worries, a companion during state and national holidays such as Nowruz and Eid. He argues that joy, peace, and even divine grace are accessible through wine. In a way, Manuchehri elevates wine to the status of a life philosophy where indulgence becomes enlightenment.

Manuchehri saw wine as a cure for sleepless nights and worldly worries. In one poem, he writes:

“*The night has arrived, and I am tormented by sleeplessness, my friend, bring the elixir (wine) that alleviates my sleeplessness.*” (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 6).

He also believed that worrying about the troubles of the world was pointless—and that wine could offer relief:

“*Do not waste your time worrying about the world, for your sorrow will not ease its pain. Enjoy life while you can, before it overwhelms you. This world is like a mad dog—it may bite you, but you’ll never catch it. Ignore its chaos, because you won’t fix it. Instead, fill your cup with wine, for nothing frees the soul like wine.*” (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 24).

On Nowruz, the Persian New Year, Manuchehri encourages living the moment and joyful celebration:

“*It is a very happy day—you should hold the cup in your hand from morning onward. There is no better excuse. God has given you this gift. What more do you need? Be happy, drink freely, and don’t worry about tomorrow, because this world*

*is like a passing breeze, a fleeting dream.*" (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 19).

In another poem, he emphasises that celebrating Nowruz with wine is not just enjoyable—it's honourable:

*"O cupbearer, bring golden wine in a silver cup. Drinking wine is how we honour the arrival of spring. If someone doesn't drink wine on Nowruz, they're neither noble nor worthy of good company."* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 45).

For Manuchehri, wine was more than a temporary comfort, but a lifelong companion—it was a constant presence throughout life:

*"O cup of wine, I give you my heart and soul, for you have lifted sorrow from me. Wherever you are, I find peace—whether I'm awake or asleep. My heart knows you well, my body is at ease with you, and you fill my life with joy. Wherever you go, I go. Wherever you have been, that is where I belong. O wine, God has blessed those who are worthy of you—you bring peace to both body and soul. You are always near—whether in my cask, my cup, my hand, or my mouth. Your sweet scent is always with me, and my clothes are stained with your colour. Dear friends, when I die, wash me in red wine, scent me with the smell of grapes, and wrap me in a shroud made of green vine leaves."* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 69).

In bold and humorous fashion, Manuchehri celebrates the end of the fasting month of Ramadan and celebrating it with wine:

*"The month of Ramadan has passed, and I'm glad it's over—thanks be to God. What was coming has now passed, and what was going is gone—thank goodness. Eid has arrived, the fast is over. Butler, bring me wine—out in the garden, on the grass. I break my fast with this red nectar. Give some to the travellers and don't argue. Put a goblet in one hand and another in the other. I love to drink wine from big cups with both hands. When you pour, say 'Drink!' and keep them full—don't let my cup be empty."* (Manuchehri, 1347: pp. 88-89).

In a beautiful and symbolic description of early morning, Manuchehri again turns to wine for comfort:

*"The rooster crows—the call to prayer for the drunkards. The mountain wraps itself in cloud, and the morning star rises from the east. Bring the wine that heals the poor. Wake up and drink the morning wine, you who are still asleep! We drunkards carry sorrow in our hearts, and our cure is morning wine. Just as a snakebite is cured with another snake, so too must the sorrowful drink wine to be healed."* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 177).

Manuchehri calls wine the "healer of all pains," and says it brings warmth, joy, and peace:

*"Take the cup of wine in your hand—it brings happiness. Wine is my comfort and companion, day and night. It is a powerful medicine, the wise call it the healer of all suffering. Without wine, joy is impossible, because joy's very essence is found in wine. It calms the anxious and warms the cold. So, raise your glass, speak kindly, and wish others well—that is true grace and generosity."* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 215).

Manuchehri also links wine to harmony with the beauty of nature and physical

well-being:

*“Come! It’s the perfect time for morning wine. The weather is just right—not too hot or cold. No sun, no wind, no dust. Bring old wine, O beauty from Kashmir—give me full cups, take the empty ones. Give me that clear golden wine—not yellow from sickness, not weak in love—but wine that strengthens the soul, perfumes the mind, brightens the eyes, and brings colour to the face.”* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 218).

In one of his more playful and clever passages, Manuchehri recommends wine for every day of the week:

*“On a blessed Saturday, drink wine—don’t turn a good day sour. According to Moses’ tradition, wine is allowed today, so enjoy new wine in harmony with this moment. If it’s Sunday, begin it with wine—that’s the way of noble people. Following the tradition of Jesus, drink pure wine and don’t push away your good fortune. On Monday, drink joyfully—that was the habit of the old priests. On Tuesday, lift your cup and let happiness fill the day. On Wednesday, the day of sorrow, drink wine and fill large cups to bring peace. On Thursday—the day of celebration—drink strong, bitter wine for comfort. And after Saturday afternoon prayers, drink wine, for God is forgiving.”* (Manuchehri, 1347: p. 22).

Through his poetry, Manuchehri paints wine as a symbol of joy, comfort, and resilience. Whether during festivals like Nowruz, after a long night of insomnia, or at the end of fasting, wine becomes his answer to the struggles of life. His verses invite readers not just to drink, but to live fully, love deeply, and let go of fear and sorrow. For Manuchehri, wine is not just a beverage—it’s a way of life.

Abu’l Bath Omar Khayyam (c. 1047-1123 AD, Nishapur, Iran), a distinguished mathematician, astrologer, philosopher, and poet (Ghanbari, 2010; pp. 634-650, Thackston, 2000: p. 25), transforms wine into a metaphysical metaphor. In the *Rubā’ iyyāt* (quatrains), wine obliterates both regret and fear, enabling the drinker to live in the eternal “now.” It is not escapism but engagement—a deliberate, defiant embrace of impermanence. Khayyam’s tavern is a sanctuary, his cup a crucible of truth. Even when acknowledging wine’s rebellion against religious law, he posits it as a higher moral clarity, more valuable than pious posturing. He urges his readers to seize the present, declaring:

*“Ah! my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears  
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears-  
To-morrow? -Why, To-morrow I may be  
Myself with Yesterday’s Seven Thousand Years”* (Khayyam, 1955: p. 102).

Here, Khayyam encourages living in the moment, embracing the fleeting nature of life. The present, he suggests, is a space where past regrets and future anxieties hold no sway, allowing for the freedom to simply exist. In another quatrain, he continues this theme, beckoning the reader to awaken and enjoy life while they still have time, as time itself is ephemeral:

*“Dreaming when Dawn’s Left Hand was in the Sky  
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,*

*'Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup  
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry'* (Khayam, 1955: p. 110).

This cry from within the tavern further emphasizes the urgency of living in the present moment. Khayyam personifies life itself as "Liquor in its Cup," reminding the reader that life's pleasures, like wine, are fleeting. The metaphor suggests that once life is gone, it cannot be reclaimed.

Khayyam's meditation on life's impermanence continues as he reflects on the secrets of existence, found in the simple act of drinking:

*"Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn  
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn.  
And Lip to Lip it murmured—' While you live Drink!—for once dead you never  
shall return'"* (Khayam, 1955: p. 150).

Here, he invites the reader to discover the secret of life in the cup, emphasizing that life's mysteries are not to be pondered in abstraction but experienced directly. The phrase "*while you live Drink!*" is an admonition to embrace the present before death comes and robs us of the opportunity.

Khayyam also contemplates the conflict between wine and religious or societal norms. He admits the paradox of wine's liberating power, even if it challenges conventional morality:

*"And much as Wine has played the Infidel,  
And robed me of my Robe of Honour-well,  
I often wonder what the Vintners buy  
One half so precious as the Goods they sell"* (Khayam, 1955; p. 170).

Here, he acknowledges the societal critique of wine but ultimately values it more highly than the honour and goods others may chase. Wine, for Khayyam, becomes a tool for transcendence—whether through its inebriating qualities or its role in offering solace from life's struggles.

His quatrains culminate in a final, profound statement on wine's liberating role in life. It is both a literal and figurative remedy, offering respite from the extremes of human existence:

*"Consume wine, for it shall liberate you from the extremes of excess and deficiency, from the conflicts of seventy-two nations. Refrain from abstaining from this elixir, for a single sip can alleviate a multitude of ailments"* (Khayam, 1955: p. 226).

Wine, in this vision, becomes a cure for all human conflicts and imbalances, a universal elixir that can free the individual from the chaos of life.

Together, these quatrains form a cohesive philosophy: Khayyam presents wine as a symbol of liberation, urging his readers to embrace the fleeting present, to transcend societal judgments, and to find comfort in the simple pleasures of life before it slips away. The act of drinking wine is not just an indulgence, but a way to engage fully with existence, to live in the moment, and to confront the uncertainties of life head-on.

Afzalluddin Khāqāni (c. 1121 AD, Shirwan, Azerbaijan; died in c. 1190 AD in

Tabriz, Iran) (Rypka, 1968: pp. 202-209) believes that “*the sole credit and capital of one’s life are their youth, and the rest of life is insignificant.*” He appears to have been experiencing depression, as he admits to self-medicating with wine, praising its “*soul-nourishing*” properties. Khāqāni famously exclaimed: “*Grant me that elixir of life, that pure wine, that soul-nourishing gem, the sole remedy for my heart filled with sorrow and my eyes overflowing with tears*” (Ghanbari, 2010: p. 97).

Ali bin Vahidu’d-din Muhammad Anwari (born in 1126 in Abivard, Turkmenistan, and passing away in 1189) (Rypka, 1968: p. 202, Thackston, 2000: pp. 26-27) famously referred to wine as the “*food for man’s spirit*” due to its antidepressant properties and its ability to purge the “*rust of sadness from the soul*” and transform a “*housefly into a falcon*” (Anwari, 1985: p. 373). Anwari openly admits to excessive wine consumption, and an analysis of his poetry indicate that he uses wine as a form of self-medication.

Ilyas bin Yusuf Nizami (1141-1209), born in Ganja, Azerbaijan (Rypka, 1968: pp. 197-199; Thackston, 2000: pp. 31-32), while concurring with Anwari’s assertion that “*wine cures man’s sorrow,*” diverges from Anwari’s conviction that excessive wine consumption is beneficial. Nizami asserts that while “*wine may alleviate sorrow, it should be avoided, as it can diminish the intellect and transform a sharp mind into a weakened one*” (Nizami, 2010: p. 168).

## 4.2. Divine Wine and Spiritual Intoxication

Sufi Persian poetry originated in Afghanistan and is associated with the renowned poet and mystic Abul-Majd Majdud Sana’i (c. 1080-1130 CE, Ghazni, Afghanistan). Sana’i pioneered the fusion of poetry with mysticism, establishing mystical poetry as the foundation of Persian literature (Nicholson, 2001: p. 259; Rypka, 1968: p. 231). In Sufi Persian poetry, symbolism plays a pivotal role in establishing the mystical connection between the soul and God. The “*wine cellar*” (*maykhāna*, *majkadah*) frequently serves as a metaphor for the soul of the perfected mystic, brimming with enthusiasm and ardent desire for divine knowledge or the realm of theology (Dehkhoda, 1998; XIV: p. 21955). However, it also symbolises the abode of a spiritual guide. Conversely, “*wine*” (*šarāb*) embodies love and divine intoxication, propelling the soul to transcend the material realm and attain unity with God. The “*waiter*” (*sāqih*), often personified as God, intoxicates all creation with the ecstasy of love (Dehkhoda, 1998; IX: 13322, Nicholson, 2001; str. 207). The “*wine cask*” (*khomm-e maj*) symbolises enlightenment and intuitive knowledge, contrasting with the “*waterskin*” (*mashk*), which represents reason, logic, and scientific methodologies (Nicholson, 2001: p. 226). This duality reflects Sufi philosophy, which prioritises intuitive, divine knowledge over rational, worldly comprehension. In this mystical tradition, the “*intoxication*” (*mastī*) is not caused by earthly wine, but by the intoxication of divine love, an ecstatic state that represents the soul’s longing for and eventual union with God (Nicholson, 2001; p. 200), and the “*mastī*” (intoxicated) symbolizes the lover immersed in the beloved

(Dehkhoda, 1998; XIII: p. 20800).

Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism, emphasises the union of the human being with God through the power of love. This union is often believed to be of the will, requiring suffering and love as necessary conditions (Honderich, 1995: p. 902). Immensurate love is considered the real foundation of the mystical relationship with God. It begins with *ishq-i majāzi* (earthly or metaphorical love), which serves as a bridge to *ishq-i haqīqī* (True Love) (Rypka, 1968: p. 231). Love in Sufism implies the annihilation of self, known as *fanā* (self-annihilation), where the lover loses their sense of self to achieve perfect union with the divine Beloved (Nicholson, 2001: pp. 197-198). According to Sufi thought, the soul, before entering the world, experienced intimate union with God, and now seeks to return to this union, the Beloved *par excellence* (Nicholson, 2001: pp. 198, 308-309). The famous Sufi Shaikh Abu Said Abu'l Khair noted that “*the veil between man and God is not earth or heaven, not the empyrean or the throne, the veil is your conceit and egoism. When they are removed, thou hast arrived at God*” (Nicholson, 2001: p. 324). This idea is echoed by Rumi, who advises, “*Become nought, nought from selfhood, because there is no crime worse than your being*” (Maulawi, 1387, I, pp. 334-335). He also asserts that “*whoever says ‘I falls into trouble*” (Nicholson, 2001: p. 278).

The term *Sufi* is derived from the Arabic word *súf* (wool), referring to the coarse woollen garments that early Sufis wore (Naficy, 1965: pp. 34, 73-74; Dehkhoda, 1998, Vol. VIII, p. 15092; Rypka, 1968: p. 227). A key Sufi doctrine is the indifference of religions—Sufis regard all forms of worship as “*broken lights*” of the One Being. In this view, the sincere idolater is considered more praiseworthy than the orthodox hypocrite (Nicholson, 2001: p. 238).

Islamic Sufism is traditionally divided into three main regional branches: Iraqi Sufism, associated with the name of al-Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910), Egyptian and Syrian Sufism, connected to figures like Abu'l Fayd Dhu'n-Nun (d. 859), and Iranian Sufism (Naficy, 1965, p. 75; Rypka, 1968: p. 228). Iranian or Indo-Iranian Sufism, often called Eastern Sufism, traces its roots to ascetics from Balkh (Afghanistan), including Ibrahim Adham (d. ca. 780), Shaiq Balkhi (d. ca. 788), and Hātam Asam (d. ca. 851). Balkh is therefore, considered the birthplace of Indo-Iranian Sufism (Naficy, 1965: pp. 34-42, 197).

Among the most famous Sufi orders is the Chishti order, founded by Abu Ahmad Abdāl of Chisht (d. 969) a town near Herat, Afghanistan (Jami, 1859: pp. 366-367). The Chishti order was established in India by Mu'in al-Din of Chisht (1143-1236) and became one of the most influential Sufi orders in South Asia. Other significant orders include the Qāderi, practiced in Afghanistan and India, the Naqshbandi, practiced in Afghanistan, India, and Asia Minor, and the Suhrawardi, which is mainly followed in Iraq, Southern Iran, India, and Bengal (Naficy, 1965: pp. 41, 197-199).

In the 20th century, the Chishti Sufi order extended its influence beyond Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, spreading to countries such as the United

Kingdom, France, Belgium, Canada, and the United States—largely through patterns of migration (Naficy, 1965: pp. 197-199). One of the key figures in this transnational expansion was Inayat Khan, a musician and mystic originally affiliated with the Chishti order. After relocating to the United States, Khan founded the Sufi Order in 1917, which later evolved into the broader spiritual movement known as Universal Sufism (Sedgwick, 2016: p. 10).

Building on Khan's legacy, the Sufi Ruhaniat International—an offshoot of Universal Sufism—was established in 1970 by Samuel Lewis, also known as Murshid Samuel Lewis or Sufi Ahmed Murad Chishti. An American mystic and horticulturalist, Lewis was a direct disciple of Inayat Khan. Born to Jewish parents, he came from a prominent San Francisco family; his father, Jacob Lewis, served as a vice president of Levi Strauss & Co. (Lewis, 1986).

Sanai's works are a cornerstone of the Sufi poetic tradition, where he eloquently conveys the spiritual intoxication that springs from divine love and oneness with God. Sanai depicts divine beauty and love as transformative forces that lead the soul to spiritual intoxication. In one of his most poignant expressions of this concept, he writes:

*“Your beauty has bestowed upon us life, while your glory has instilled in us humility.*

*Oh, serene heart of all, when you exist, all our aspirations are realized.*

*The elixir of love emanating from your radiant countenance has intoxicated us.*

*Should we ever have the privilege of kissing your feet, the prosperity of both realms shall be ours” (Sanā'i, 1377: p. 173).*

Sanai's poetic vision reveals that the beauty of the Divine not only brings life but also humbles the soul, compelling it to surrender and seek union. The “elixir of love” emanating from the Divine's presence intoxicates the seeker, symbolising a profound spiritual transformation that leads to ultimate union with God. This metaphorical intoxication signifies a state of ecstatic love and divine understanding, where the boundaries of the material world dissolve in the presence of the Divine. Through such symbolic imagery, Sufi poets like Sanā'i invite the reader to embark on a deeper spiritual journey, transcending the rational mind to experience the blissful, mystical union with the Divine.

Furthermore, Sanai portrays wine as a divine gift, comparing it to the “hand of Moses, full of miracles,” or to the “resurrecting power of Jesus, bringing the dead back to life.” He further underscores wine's role as a source of wisdom and spiritual nourishment, asserting that it is the only drink that truly tends to the needs of humanity in this challenging world (Sanai, 1394: pp. 404-406).

This symbolic use of wine as an expression of divine love and spiritual awakening finds a powerful echo in the work of Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492), a prolific author and scholar, composing in prose as well as mixed prose-poetry work. In collaboration with Timurid Sultan Husayn Bāyaqrā (1470-1506) and his vizier Mir Ali Sher Nawāi (1441-1501), Jāmī helped establish Herat as the literary capital of the age (Thackston, 2000: p. 71). A devoted member of the Naqshbandi Sufi

order, Jāmi's poetry continues and deepens the mystical tradition laid out by earlier poets like Sanāi, adopting similar metaphors of wine and intoxication to convey the ecstasy of divine union.

His most famous works—*Haft Aurang* (“Seven Thrones”), *Bahāristān* (“The Spring Garden”), and *Nafahātū'l-uns* (“Breaths of Familiarity”)—exemplify this vision and left a lasting influence on the literature of Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia, Turkey, and India (Rypka, 1968: pp. 286-287). Jāmi's poetry, like Sanāi's, resonates with a deep yearning for spiritual truth, using the imagery of wine to articulate the soul's intoxication with divine love. As he states:

*“You are the source of light in the universe. Every cellar in the world is filled with the elixir of your love. We are intoxicated in this world's tavern with the wine of your love. We are like a shattered cup, please assist us, for we have no one else to turn to except you”* (Jami, 1375: p. 516).

In both poets' visions, wine serves as a sacred metaphor—representing not indulgence, but transformation, revelation, and surrender. Sanāi and Jāmi, separated by centuries, are united by their devotion to a spiritual poetics that seeks not only to describe the divine but to evoke its overwhelming presence through the language of metaphor and mysticism.

In another verse, Jami further emphasizes this divine longing:

*“Come, cupbearer, bring the wine constantly and perpetually, as the world rotates. Pour wine every time, just as the world spins. Give us that wine that brings peace to our souls and liberates us from this mortal form”* (Jami, 1375: p. 970).

Jallaluddin Balkhi, also known as Rumi, considered as one of the greatest poets of the world, and the unique genius of the Islamic Sufism (Arbery, 2004: p. 10) poignantly illustrates this concept in his *Divan Shams-e Tabrizi*, a collection of poems dedicated to his spiritual guide, Shamsuddin of Tabriz, whom he met in Koniya around 1221 or 1222 (Maulawi, 1387; I: p. 12).

The concepts of “*sharāb-e alast*” (eternal wine) and “*mast-e alast*” (eternal intoxication) that are frequently used by Rumi, are deeply rooted in Sufi philosophy, representing a profound spiritual state. They symbolise the primordial experience that the souls of humanity had before their physical creation. According to Sufi interpretations of Qur'an 7:172, when God asks the souls, “*Am I not your Lord?*” and they respond, “*Yes, You are!*” (The Qur'an, 2010c, VII: p. 172) it marks a cosmic covenant, a moment of direct communion with God before earthly existence.

Rumi writes:

“Before there was garden and wine and grape in the world,  
Our soul was intoxicated with immortal wine.  
Before this image of the spirit became a builder on water and clay (the body),  
Our life was founded in the tavern of celestial truth.”  
(Rumi, 2001: p. 248).

In this passage, Rumi speaks of the soul's existence before the physical world, symbolised by garden, wine, and grape. The “immortal wine” refers to divine love

or truth that the soul was intoxicated with, long before the body was created. Rumi is of the opinion that our true essence is connected to a higher, celestial truth, and the physical form we inhabit is a temporary vessel for this eternal soul. Rumi emphasizes the idea that our deepest nature is rooted in divine wisdom. The “wine” or “intoxication” represents divine love that transcends the soul, leading to an unshakable recognition of God’s unity and presence (Rumi, 2001: p. 224).

In Sufi mysticism, *sharāb-e alast* symbolises this celestial divine love and connection, while *mast-e alast* refers to the intoxication of the soul by this love, which overwhelms ordinary consciousness. This spiritual intoxication is not destructive but an ecstatic, unifying devotion. Sufis believe that this divine love, experienced before creation, is the essence of spiritual longing. The goal is for the mystic to reconnect with this eternal love, transcending the material world and returning to the state of divine intimacy (Rumi, 2001: p. 226; Thackston, 2000: p. 37).

For Sufi masters like Rumi, the soul’s journey is not one of obligation but a passionate return to the Divine Beloved through love. This love transcends all dualities and becomes the driving force of spiritual life. The “testimony” in Qur’an 7:172 is seen not just as a declaration of obedience but as the soul’s recognition of and commitment to this eternal love. The Sufi interpretation suggests that our souls always knew God, and the return to Him is not out of duty but through reawakening to the original, divine connection—the eternal intoxication of love (Rumi, 2001: p. 224).

Rumi’s verses often present this spiritual “*drunkenness*” as a form of divine grace that transcends the limitations of the material world. One of his famous lines encapsulates this concept:

*“God is the Sāqhi (the Cupbearer) and the Wine, He knows what manner of Love mine is.”* (Rumi, 2001; p. xliii; Maulawi, 1387; I: p. 100).

Here, Rumi emphasizes that God is both the source of intoxication (the *Cupbearer*) and the very essence of that intoxication (the *Wine*), highlighting the belief that divine love is the key to spiritual enlightenment.

Another significant verse from *Divan Shams-e Tabrizi* elaborates further on this intoxicating spiritual experience:

*“The wine of God’s grace is without a rim. If it appears to have a rim, it is the fault of the cup.”* (Rumi, 2001; p. xliii, Maulawi, 1387; I: p. 549).

In this line, Rumi expresses that divine grace is infinite and boundless. Any perceived limitations, such as the rim of a cup, arise from the finite nature of human perception and are not a true reflection of the infinite nature of divine grace.

Rumi continues to describe spiritual intoxication with vivid and evocative imagery:

*“That moon, which the sky had never seen even in dreams, has returned and brought a fire that no water can extinguish. Behold the body’s dwelling and behold my soul, which has been intoxicated and left desolate by the cup of His love. When the host of the tavern became my heart’s desire, my blood turned to wine and my heart to kabab. Whenever my eyes are filled with thoughts of Him, a voice arrives:*

*‘Well done, O flagon, and bravo, wine!’ Love’s tears, like roots and stems, tear down every house where sunlight falls from love.” (Rumi, 2001: pp. 26-27).*

In this passage, Rumi beautifully fuses the physical and spiritual realms, illustrating how the soul becomes intoxicated by divine love, transforming the essence of the self. The imagery of the body’s dwelling, the moon, and a fire that no water can extinguish serve to deepen the mystical experience of divine love and intoxication.

Rumi further invites the soul into this state of spiritual intoxication:

*“Come to me, my soul, for the Beloved is present within. The entire house is intoxicated, and none of them know who is. Do not remain intoxicated at the door, come into the house swiftly. He is the one who dwells in the darkness, and his place is the threshold. Even though there are thousands of those who are intoxicated with God, they are still one. However, those who are intoxicated with lust—even if there is only one of them—he is a double.” (Rumi, 2001: pp. 60-61; Maulawi, 1387; I: pp. 259-260).*

Rumi stresses that true intoxication is not a physical state but a deep connection with the Divine. Those intoxicated by divine love experience unity, whereas those intoxicated by worldly desires, symbolized by lust, remain fragmented and dual in nature.

Lastly, in another passionate and intimate line, Rumi addresses the divine cupbearer, invoking the metaphor of wine as a means of spiritual liberation:

*“O chosen Cupbearer, O apple of mine eyes, the like of Thee. Ne’er appeared in Persia, nor in Arabia have I found it. Pour out wine till I become a wanderer from myself. For in selfhood and existence I have felt only fatigue.” (Rumi, 2001: pp. 128-129; Maulawi, 1387; II: pp. 887-888).*

Here, Rumi calls upon the divine cupbearer, symbolizing his yearning for divine love, which will liberate him from the constraints of individual selfhood. In this state of spiritual intoxication, Rumi seeks release from the burdens of earthly existence, finding weariness only in the concept of selfhood. The metaphor of wine as a vehicle for spiritual liberation illustrates the Sufi belief in transcending the self and merging with the Divine through divine love.

Thus, in Rumi’s poetry, wine and intoxication are powerful metaphors for the transcendent, ecstatic union with God. The cup of wine represents not physical intoxication, but a spiritual state where the soul is immersed in divine love, liberation, and enlightenment.

### **4.3. Hāfez: The Bridge Between Khayyam’s Hedonism and Rumi’s Mysticism**

Shamsuddin Mohammad Hāfez (1327-1390 Shiraz, Iran) (Hāfez, 2002: p. vii; Khan, 1993: pp. 145-147) is one of the most renowned and controversial poets in Persian literature (Thackston, 2000: p. 64; Rypka, 1968: pp. 263-274). His works present a complex interplay of themes that blend hedonistic pleasures with spiritual transcendence, creating a multifaceted image of the poet. While at times his poetry echoes the thoughts of Omar Khayyam, celebrating life’s fleeting pleasures, it also

frequently aligns with Sufi mysticism, emphasising divine love and the soul's quest for union with the Divine. This duality in his work has led to varied interpretations of his poetry.

On one hand, Hāfez's poetry is reminiscent of Omar Khayyam, particularly in its reflections on the transience of life and its encouragement to indulge in earthly pleasures as a response to the impermanence of existence. Some scholars even refer to Hāfez as the "second Khayyam" (Ghanbari, 2010: p. 317), due to the shared themes of *carpe diem* (seize the day) and hedonism found in their work. Like Khayyam, Hāfez celebrates wine, love, and sensual pleasures, seeing them as ways to cope with the inevitable hardships of life.

For instance, in one of his verses, Hāfez writes:

*"What is better than fun, chatting, garden, and spring? Where is the cupbearer, what is the reason for waiting? Appreciate any happy spell you catch; no one knows what the end of this affair of life is. Beware! Life hangs from a strand of hair. Take care of yourself; why do you worry about the world? The true meaning of the elixir of life and the garden of Eram (paradise) is nothing but the side of a stream and some savoury wine"* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 79; Hāfez, 2010: p. 85).

This emphasis on the fleeting nature of life and the value of enjoying the present moment is also present in other works by Hāfez:

*"Rise and pour the blissful water (wine) into the golden bowl, before the bowl of our skulls becomes a dustpan. Ultimately, our home is the valley of silence, for now, cast a tumult in the dome of skies"* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 314, Hāfez, 2010: p. 287).

Hāfez further expresses the urgency of living in the present, urging his readers to seize the moment before it slips away:

*"Fill the cup with wine, and hurry up, for the sphere of the sky does not dally over its rotation. Before this ephemeral world is ruined, ruin me with a glass of rose wine. On the day, the wheel of time makes bowls from my clay, make sure you fill the bowl of my skull with wine"* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 458, Hāfez, 2010: p. 423).

In this sense, Hāfez, much like Khayyam, mourns the transience of life and encourages his readers to indulge in life's pleasures, for they are fleeting and beyond human control. This hedonistic element is central to his poetry and mirrors the worldview found in Khayyam's Rubaiyat.

However, Hāfez's poetry is not limited to hedonism. It also contains significant elements of Sufi mysticism, where the divine Love ("Ishq") and the Beloved ("Ma'shuq") become the ultimate source of meaning and fulfilment. This aspect of his work aligns more closely with the spiritual philosophy of Rumi, where wine is symbolic of spiritual intoxication, not a means of worldly pleasure, but a metaphor for the soul's quest to unite with the Divine.

In one of his mystical poems, Hāfez reflects on the spiritual journey, stating:

*"Do not censure the wrongdoers, O clean-natured ascetic! The sin of another person will not be written against you. Whether I am good or bad, you mind your own business! In the end, each person reaps what he sowed. Everyone, sober or drunk, seeks the beloved. Every place, a mosque or a synagogue, is the house of love."* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 95, Hāfez, 2010: p. 98).

Here, Hāfez emphasizes that love transcends all earthly distinctions—whether one is sober or intoxicated, every soul seeks the Divine. This highlights the Sufi belief that divine love is universal and the path to spiritual enlightenment.

In many of his poems, Hāfez also reflects the Sufi perspective that the physical body and the material world are prisons, and death represents liberation, a return to the Divine. This idea mirrors the mystical views of Rumi. Hāfez, like Rumi, views death not as an end, but as a reunion with the Beloved:

*“I am a bird of paradise, how shall I explain how I was banished, and how I fell into this snare of troubles (of life)? I was an angel, and my abode was in the highest of paradise. It was Adam who brought me to this desolate place”* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 370; Hāfez, 2010: p. 367).

Another verse reflects this longing for spiritual freedom:

*“We have not come to this door to seek pomp and glory. We have taken refuge here from the malice of events. Heading for the house of love, we have come all the way, from the border of non-existence to the clime of existence. Having seen the beauty of your face, we have come from the garden of paradise in quest of that mandrake”* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 425; Hāfez, 2010: p. 392).

Hāfez further expresses his desire to escape the constraints of the physical world:

*“My body, like dust, covers the face of my soul; blessed is the moment when I drop the veil off that face. Such a cage is not worthy of a sweet-singing bird like me, I must return to the paradise, for I am the bird of that garden”* (Hāfez, 2002: p. 425; Hāfez, 2010: p. 367).

Hāfez highlights the soul’s desire to escape the body and reunite with the Divine, echoing Rumi’s mystical themes.

Hāfez’s poetry, therefore, reveals a delicate balance between hedonistic indulgence and mystical longing. While his celebration of love, wine, and the joy of life echoes the philosophy of Khayyam, his spiritual themes and quest for divine love align him more closely with the teachings of Sufi mystics like Rumi. This duality in his work has led to varied interpretations. On one hand, Hāfez’s poems may appear to advocate for indulgence in worldly pleasures, but a deeper reading reveals a longing for spiritual transcendence and reunion with the Divine.

This complexity is what makes Hāfez one of the most profound and enigmatic poets in Persian literature. His poetry demands a nuanced understanding that recognises the intersection of the physical and the spiritual, the earthly and the divine. Hāfez invites readers to explore both the pleasures of this world and the deeper, transcendent meanings that lie beyond them. In doing so, his verses continue to resonate with readers across generations, offering insights into both the human condition and the eternal quest for spiritual enlightenment.

## 5. Conclusion

The metaphor of wine in New Persian (Farsi-Dari) literature from the 10th to 15th centuries reveals a deep-seated cultural, spiritual, and psychological tension be-

tween religious orthodoxy and personal, often poetic, expression. Emerging from the interwoven legacies of Zoroastrian ritual, Islamic jurisprudence, and Persian poetic imagination, wine becomes more than a motif—it evolves into a lens through which human experience is both interrogated and celebrated.

Through poets like Rudaki and Manuchehri, wine appears as both a revealer of moral essence and a life-affirming elixir, tied to moments of joy, festivity, and existential release. Rudaki's assertion that wine "reveals a man's honour" and is "the remedy for sleepless eyes" positions it as both moral arbiter and therapeutic tool (Rudaki, 1997: p. 84). Manuchehri expands on this, calling wine the "healer of all pains" and praising its ability to dispel anxiety and bring joy to life's most sacred moments, from Nowruz to Eid (Manuchehri, 1347: pp. 6, 19, 69, 88-89, 215). Among Persian poets, Manuchehri stands out as particularly influenced by Arabic predecessors (Dehkhoda, 1998, Vol. XIV, pp. 21707-21709). He frequently references several pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab poets in his works, including Jarwal bin Aws bin Mālik al-Hutay'ah (c. 600-678), Umayya ibn Abī al-Ṣalt (d. ca. 626), Nasīb ibn Riyāḥ (known as Abū Mihjan, d. ca. 690)—a Black Arab poet and former slave—and Abū Aqīl Labīd (d. ca. 690) (Manuchehri, 1347, pp. 73, 81). Such intertextual engagement reveals a admiration for, and literary borrowing from, the Arabic poetic tradition.

Similarly, Omar Khayyam is thought to have been influenced by Abu al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (973-1058), the blind Syrian philosopher-poet renowned for his scepticism and rationalism (Ghanbari, 2010, pp. 273-307; Rypka, 1968, p. 190). However, Khayyam's most direct poetic inspiration appears to have been Abū Nuwās (c. 747-814), best known for his *khamriyyāt* (wine poetry) (Ghanbari, 2010: p. 288). Interestingly, Rypka (1968: p. 137) notes that although Abu Nuwas wrote in Arabic, he was of Iranian origin—further underscoring the intertwined and hybrid nature of Persian and Arabic literary cultures.

In the works of Khayyam, the wine cup becomes a symbol of temporal consciousness, urging the reader to abandon regret and anxiety in favour of present pleasure and philosophical clarity. His verses elevate wine as a metaphysical tool that liberates the self from the illusions of permanence and control (Khayam, 1955: pp. 102, 110, 150, 170, 226). Conversely, Rumi's mystical lens transforms wine into a metaphor of spiritual intoxication—an emblem of the annihilation of the self in divine love, where taverns become places of transcendence rather than transgression (Rumi, 2001: pp. 60-61; Maulawi, 1387, I: pp. 259-260).

Hāfez, ever enigmatic, weaves both earthly and spiritual strands into a poetics that transcends the binary between the sacred and the profane. He simultaneously praises the sensual pleasures of wine and laments the hypocrisy of religious moralists, offering a worldview in which earthly joy and divine longing are not mutually exclusive (Hāfez, 2002: p. 95; Hāfez, 2010: p. 98).

With Khāqāni and Anwari, the metaphor of wine turns inward, revealing its function as a tool of psychological escape. Khāqāni pleads for wine as a "soul-nourishing gem," exposing both his inner turmoil and his need for emotional sol-

ace (Ghanbari, 2010: p. 97). Like many of his predecessors, Khāqāni was well-versed in Arabic literary traditions and appears to have drawn inspiration from prominent Arab poets. One notable example is Maymun ibn Qays al-A'sha (c. 570-625 AD), who famously remarked that “people have not found anything better than wine for repulsing sadness” (Al-A'sha, 1987: p. 29). Anwari takes this further, describing wine as the “food for man's spirit” and openly reflecting on its addictive pull and depressive undertones (Anwari, 1985: p. 373). Here, wine ceases to be celebratory—it becomes survival.

Nizami, standing on the threshold of moral reflection, offers a critical and cautious voice. While conceding that wine might temporarily alleviate sorrow, he warns that it “can diminish the intellect and transform a sharp mind into a weakened one” (Nizami, 2010: p. 168). This signals a maturing of the wine metaphor—no longer merely a celebration of pleasure or spiritual transport, but a recognition of its dual-edged nature.

Together, these voices chart the evolving landscape of Persian thought and feeling—where wine, despite its legal and moral ambiguity, remains a potent symbol of freedom, loss, beauty, and transcendence. Its persistent presence in Persian verse across centuries and borders is a testament to the enduring complexity of the human condition and the literary imagination that seeks to express it.

In the end, wine in Persian poetry is not merely a drink. It is a mirror of culture, a vessel of philosophical inquiry, and a language of resistance—against rigidity, against despair, and against forgetting the sweetness of the fleeting now.

Moreover, the poetic use of wine served as a subtle yet powerful means for writers to challenge orthodox norms and explore deeper philosophical and spiritual truths. As a metaphor, wine became a vehicle for expressing inner freedom, encapsulating the ongoing tension between official religious doctrine and the vibrant, pluralistic cultural life of Persianate society. It thus emerged as a symbol of both rebellion and transcendence.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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