

The Mystery of Return to the Primordial Homeland and Its Relationship with the Concept of Love in Hafiz's Ghazals

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ABSTRACT

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The concept of the “primordial homeland,” understood as the metaphysical origin of humankind, is vividly manifested in the ghazals of Hafez of Shiraz. Drawing upon his mystical worldview, Hafez conceives of the human being as a creature perpetually bound to the Divine source, whereby existence as a whole acquires meaning as the presence of God. Within this perspective, ethnic, racial, and geographical distinctions hold no fundamental value; rather, what is essential is the human being's belonging to the Divine origin and the innate yearning to return to it. This study, adopting a descriptive–analytical approach, explores the notion of homeland in Hafez's poetry, its relation to the covenant of 'Ahd al-Alast (the primordial pact), and the role of “love” in both enduring the separation from and attaining reunion with that homeland. Through the portrayal of a vast and enchanting cosmos, Hafez demonstrates that reaching this spiritual homeland is neither unattainable nor exclusive to a privileged few; rather, it becomes possible through the universal and fundamental force of “love.” Thus, in Hafez's thought, the mystery of creation and the ultimate purpose of existence are embodied in a passionate attraction that leads humankind back to its primordial homeland.

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Introduction

In Islamic mysticism (*Erfan*), the concept of the “Primordial Homeland” (*vatan-e ma’luf*) designates the celestial, pre-material origin of the human soul prior to its descent (*hubut*) into the terrestrial realm. While mystical predecessors such as Sanai, Attar, and Rumi explored this metaphysical longing to return (*bazgasht be asl*), Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafiz Shirazi reinterprets this journey through a unique poetic and existential lens. Hafiz strips the concept of “homeland” of any narrow geographical, ethnic, or regional connotations, redefining it as the primordial ontological station established during the Primordial Covenant (*Ahd-e Alast* / *Ruz-e Alast*). The central problem addressed in this study is how Hafiz reconstructs the mystery of the soul’s cosmic exile and return within his *ghazals*, and how divine Love (*ishq*) functions as both the catalyst for enduring the anguish of separation (*firaq*) and the sole vehicle for spiritual reunification (*vesal*).

Method

The study utilizes a descriptive-analytical methodology grounded in library research and comparative textual analysis. The primary corpus comprises the *Divan* of Hafiz, cross-referenced with foundational Quranic intertexts (such as Surah Al-A’raf 7:172 regarding the Covenant, and Surah Al-Ahzab 33:72 regarding the Trust / *bar-e amanat*) and classical mystical treatises (e.g., Najm al-Din Razi’s *Mirsad al-Ibad*, Ahmad Ghazali’s *Sawanih*, Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani, and Ruzbehan Baqli). The textual analysis tracks the semantic intersections of *vatan*, *Alast*, *amanat*, *firaq*, and *ishq*, contrasting Hafiz’s formulations with conventional ascetic and mystical discourses.

Results

The research identifies several foundational findings regarding the interplay between the Primordial Homeland and Love in Hafiz’s thought:

- **Ontological Origin and the Primordial Covenant (*Ahd-e Alast*):** Hafiz grounds the soul’s existence in a pre-temporal event where humanity imbibed the wine of divine beauty and accepted the Divine Trust (*bar-e amanat*). This primordial event—akin to Plato’s theory of anamnesis (*tazkar*)—leaves an indelible spiritual memory in the soul. Terrestrial life is depicted as an estrangement

or exile (*ghurbat*), wherein humanity is cast like a celestial falcon (*shahbaz*) or a sacred bird (*tayr-e golshen-e qods*) trapped in the cage of the material world (*deyr-e kharab-abad*).

- **The Dialectic of Estrangement and the Wild Deer (*Ahu-ye Vahshi*):** The human condition in Hafiz's poetry is characterized by cosmic loneliness and detachment from the mundane sphere. Hafiz uses poignant motifs, such as the untamed, wandering deer (*ahu-ye vahshi*), to reflect the soul's alienation in a disordered world, constantly yearning for its original abode.
- **Love as the Engine of Ascent and Demolition of Rationalism:** Conventional intellect (*aql-e akhor-bin*) and formal asceticism (*zohd*) are deemed impotent in navigating the soul back to its source. Hafiz elevates Love as the sole cosmic power capable of transcending terrestrial limitations. Love is both the primeval motive of creation (alluding to the Hidden Treasure tradition / *Kunt-u Kanzan Makhfiyya*) and the eternal vehicle that enables the soul to endure existential grief and complete the arc of ascent (*qaws-e su'udi*).
- **Universalization and Democratization of Return:** A pivotal conceptual innovation in Hafiz's poetry is the democratization of the mystical return. Unlike monastic or elitist Sufi paradigms that reserved mystical ascension exclusively for rigorous cloistered ascetics, Hafiz presents the pathway back to the Primordial Homeland as universally accessible to all humans through the innate capacity for Love, reconciling earthly beauty (*sanam*) with divine transcendence (*Samad*).

Conclusion

The study concludes that in Hafiz's mystical cosmology, the "Primordial Homeland" is not a remote, unattainable geographic realm, but an internal existential reality accessible through the cultivation of divine Love and the transcendence of self-centered egoism (*maniyyat*). By anchoring the journey of return in the eternal covenant of *Alast* and presenting Love as the antidote to cosmic alienation, Hafiz bridges the gap between the earthly and the celestial. His poetry transforms the tragic weight of the Divine Trust into a triumphal, loving destiny, asserting that whoever's heart is revitalized by Love attains immortality and returns seamlessly to the divine origin.