

Preface

Imam Khomeini, may his soul be sanctified, was a person who, by his auspicious presence in the world of modern coercion and deception, voiced the slogan of awakening and through his noble message that had the fragrant aroma of the true breeze of monotheism, showed the path to those who had gone astray, and as among the decanters of love which had enraptured himself, he served mouthfuls to those who thirst for love and truth.

Centuries passed and the dormant earth remained expectant until the alma mater of times graduated a son such as Khomeini, a man who was a guide to the path of truth and demonstrator of the path of love and religion. Islam had remained covered under the veils of deception imposed on it by tyrants and rulers dispensing coercion and cruelty. These enemies of human happiness and salvation had concealed the beautiful face of Islam until a man rose and, through a power that arose from faith in Almighty God and his own true devotion, wiped off the dust and taught the Muslims what the true rusts of the face of Islam were and how, by manly uprising and valiant *jihad*, Islam could be saved from the pestilence in which it was engulfed.

Verily, why was Imam Khomeini promoted to such a station and become the bright sun that no bat could tolerate? Truly, if this wasn't the case, the rulers of the East and the West and their reactionary hired agents—during his blissful life when his divine guardianship, as the shadow of the heavenly tree of *Tuba*, sheltered men everywhere on earth, and after his ascension—would not undertake such extensive challenge to an epic man showing the road to salvation!

The cause for so much honor and dignity is embodied in one sentence: Imam Khomeini was assimilated in Allah and the divine religion of Islam. Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr¹ has mentioned this nicely: “Melt away in Imam Khomeini even as he had melted away in Islam.”

From your cask has come the drunkenness of the heart-lost lover;

The outcome of my life is this drunkenness, no other.

If between you and Him, besides you stands none else.

If you are a heart-lost lover, abandon yourself.

That is how he (Imam Khomeini) has acknowledged life and all that has being and existence. He considered man's worth and credibility in his seeing another but God and interpreted man's liberty to mean that he is tied to the beloved's tress and ringlet and see nothing nor be mindful of anything save the One and Only Divinity.

*I am nothing, nothing,
for being is all in naught.
Nothing else but nothing,
for You gaze upon the naught.*

During the course of his blessed life, Imam Khomeini presented to humanity, by his pen and tongue, all he had received from the divine source of grace. He wrote books, delivered sermons, wrote messages and, in his everlasting will and testament, he penned the final chapter of his guiding life. In all these the Imam has tried to speak in the language of the folks or his audience as called for by his station of guardianship and leadership. Had he spoken in his own tongue revealing the concealed secrets, none could understand. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq² ('a) has said that the Prophet (s) never in his life time addressed the people in his own tongue.

In like manner, in his divine mystic, peripatetic journeys Imam Khomeini had gained access to secrets that were concealed from others. Some of those secrets found manifestation in the glorious guardianship of this noble personality, while others are reflected in the ardent, impassionate and stirring odes and lyric poetry of His Eminence.

Imam Khomeini's poetry are indeed the hidden secrets between him and that Unique Friend—the friend for whose love only the Imam lived, who was all that he could see and acknowledge and to whose command alone he would bow.

*I will be a moth, burning,
burning all my life in her candle.
I will be drunk with wine,
marveling at her beautiful face.*

If he tolerated derisions by the ignorant; if he took poison and traded his pride,³ it was for Islam and Allah and if he waged *jihad*, that too, was to please the Lord. In his ode known as the 'Alawiyyah Elegy, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid⁴ has said:

*For love's sake the veil
of chastity I'll tear.
Infamy, should the friend's path entail
is the loveliest thing to bear.*

That is how one should be in incurring the pleasure of the friend. As a noble tradition implies, a believer

does not fear the blame of the reproachers.

From a single view, the poetry of Imam Khomeini is a compendium of all the qualities and aspects of his personality. For, his turbulent spirit has visited all corners and horizons, and the lights of his personality have radiated in all stations. At the same time, the Imam's poetry comprise his only unspoken secrets for which there was no audience in this world, for only words could withstand the weight of such unfathomable mysteries. Words are divine blessing for mankind, and God's relations with men are through words. Words were a "well" for him to put his head, as in the case of Hadrat 'Ali ('a), and whisper his hidden secrets to it. This is how Imam Khomeini's verses found form and how he occasionally composed some poetry.

Since the poetry of Imam are gnostic in expression and meaning and his mystic personality was infinite, his lyric poems and odes have multiple strata, and each reader enjoys this ocean of insight and meaning according to his capacity of understanding. The spiteful, ignorant and uncultured enemy who naturally has very scant knowledge and understanding of these concepts and takes them to mean as he thinks, regards the term, *love*, in these poems to mean as what the vulgar think of it, and the term, *Friend*, is taken to mean what the vulgar consider it to mean.

While the divine prophets were persecuted by ignorant persons and deceitful enemies or even murdered by them and the Seal of the prophets (s) were called by such elements as "crazy," "magician," "poet," etc., it is not surprising if the ignoble, spiteful individuals interpret the lofty words of Imam Khomeini in any way they want.

Verily, those who understand themselves are ever so few!

On the other hand, those who enjoy the delicacy of "the jug of love" and divine knowledge, search for perfection, and understand the term, *hijab* (veil, barrier), tear it and soar above the subterfuge of the meanings of words and immerse in the tumultuous depths of these poems, find them engulfed with the impassioned love of a servant (of God) who has rested his head at the threshold of the "Beloved" or "Friend" and wants nothing but Him. Such is the worship of the noble and free minds:

*I will rest my head on her feet,
kissing them 'till the instant of death.
I will be drunk with the wine of her jug
'till the morning of the resurrection.*

Thus, words, which are the most potent and abstract form of realization of the meanings and of setting forth the facts—that is why poetry is said to be the most abstract form of art—can themselves be *hijab* or barriers for the comprehension of the concepts.

The deeper and more exact the meaning and the heavier the moral burden of the speaker of words, the more the barriers to them. In addition to their apparent meanings, words have inner chambers and it

takes a highly skillful driver to tear up the veils and roam around from one chamber to another.

Due to its depth and richness of meanings derived from Islam, one of the characteristics of Persian mystical poetry is that meanings do not only appear on the surface of words. In fact, mystic words and terms are all used figuratively and their real meanings are concealed. Man better understands reality through allegory.

In the Holy Qur'an, wherever Almighty God speaks of Hell and Heaven, for closer comprehension by minds, He uses the names of objects that men recognize such as palaces, trees, streams, beautiful women, silk cloth, honey, fire, etc. Whereas the Hereafter, is not like this world bound by matter, and things that are there differ from things that are here on earth. And since this world is figurative in relation to the Hereafter, these objects are all used allegorically.

The core and axis of mysticism is "love," and when love comes to the fore, a lover and a beloved enter the picture and, when the poet wants to speak of the "heart-burnt lover" (whose heart has been burned by love's flame) and the tantalizing beloved and draw pictures of them, he is impelled to use whatever metaphor, comparison, allusion, and such figurative terms existing in his own language, and in this way, interpret the real love the object of which is the infinite Truth and the One-and-Only God. The poet has no other elements available to him and is obliged to make use of exoteric and real elements for stating and expressing the meanings of lofty esoteric concepts, and thus, span a bridge between matter and sense, exterior and interior, real and figurative.

It must be said that the process of the creation of the world is also in this manner and man's progressive course from the world of matter to heaven, from material to moral and beyond matter towards perfection takes place in the similar fashion. If it wasn't so, man's movement and the progression of the world and perfection would all be meaningless:

*I am a supplicant for a goblet of wine
From the hand of a sweetheart.
In whom can I confess this secret of mine,
Where can I take this sorrow?
I have lost my soul in despair
of seeing the face of the Friend.
I am the rue, whose burnt scent fills the air,
I am the moth 'round the candle.*

Who is there to understand the depth of these words? He (the Imam) was being consumed in the flame of divine love and was feeling the ecstasy of that wine which God has promised His true servants in heaven. For such a man, this world is nothing but a tight cage and his only wish is joining that "Friend".

The criterion for his attachment to objects is love for Allah. Whatever has a color and aroma like that of the Friend is beautiful for him and anything that is not reminiscent of the Friend is redundant for him.

Even the mosque, the minaret, the school and the books, if they are without Him and His ardent love, are null and void. This is so because in a monotheistic logic like this, nothing is real except Him and whatever can serve as a bridge to the Friend must be adhered to and whatever is not like this, is null and void and must be relinquished. ***“I have set my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth.”***⁵

*I did not find purity in the session of the dervishes.
Within the cloister, I heard none call on Him.
I did not find the Friend in the books of the seminary.
At the top of the minaret, I saw no sound of the Beloved.
I did not uncover anything in any scholarly books.
In the lessons of Scripture, I was led nowhere.
I spent my life in the temple, spent my life in vain.
Among my companions, I found neither cure nor affliction.
To the circle of the lovers I would go, and there I find
a breeze from the garden of a sweetheart, and footprints.*

He, who is fascinated and captivated by His Countenance, shuns anything that is not of Him. He disowns the *I*'s and the *we*'s, and avoids the circles of friends, rivals, the mystic's circle, the mosque, and the school, and searches for a refuge, away from all these, to be alone with Him and Him only and be so befuddled by His love as to “forget” himself entirely and “forget” all else. It is at this point that he (the Imam) hymns:

*Open the door of the tavern before me night and day,
for I have become weary of the mosque and seminary.*

And

*O You saqi! Fill up my cup
with wine to cleanse my soul!
For my soul is overflowing,
flowing over with passion for fame.
Fill up my cup with the wine
which annihilates this soul,
Which expels the cope of intrigue
and my well-laid traps from being.*

Even knowledge and gnosticism become *hijab* (veil, barrier) for him who sees and seeks nothing but the Truth (God) and he wants to tear up this veil, too, because knowledge and *irfan* are holy only if they can be a road to Him, otherwise, they have no per se value:

In the tavern, learning and mysticism have no way,

For in the station of the lovers, fallacy has no way.

And

*When from the gnostic realm I came,
I saw all that had been in vain,
All that we'd heard or studied of,
was vain, after I came to love.*

While all regard gnosticism as the only road to reach Him, he (Imam Khomeini) is so monotheistic that he even sees *'irfan* as a barrier and declares it null and void. He wants the plain Truth, and since the bare Truth is nothing but the sacred Essence of the Friend, everything else is null and void.

Imam Khomeini's poetry, as in the case of the personality of that great and magnanimous man, is stormy and effervescent. Albeit a love poetry, it is replete with the spirit of valiance, nobility and epic. In loving God, he is gallant, brave and fearless. He carries his own gallows and like Mansur (al-Hallaj),⁶ cries out: "*Ana al-Haqq*" (I am the Truth!) even if he would be hanged (as al-Hallaj was).

*I have departed from myself,
beating the drum of "I am the Truth!"
I have become like Mansur,
a buyer of a hanging rope.*

We are entangled in plurality while he is captivated by the mole of the Beloved or Friend's lip, the mole which is the central point of being's domain and the focal point of monotheism. We are sickly because of our carnal desires while he is befuddled by the Friend's (eye) vision and insight which oversees the secrets of all that is apparent and all that is concealed, and if that "eye" shows favor to a person he shall become ensnared, enthralled and enraptured. We are ensnared by the unreal, untrue objects. We do not see the Truth. We do not comprehend the beauty of the Friend. If we could we should surely become "beset" by it.

We are beset by the idol of *nafs* or carnal desire and the worldly idols we ourselves have created. He is captivated by that unique idol, the One and Only Friend and Master. We are concerned with thoughts of our shame and dishonor while he is free and rid of all that is lust and shame. We are caught in the meanings of words and interpretation of terms while he is beset by the love to see the beauties of the Friend. He had shed away the robe of existence and attained union with the Friend and has saddened us by his ascension. We see the world of matter and material and he is witnessing the Heaven. In the words of Ibn Abi al-Hadid:

*Patience is nice
not in separation from thee.
Hardships will all ease*

except sorrow on account of thee.

The present volume is Dr. Ghulam-Rida A'wani and Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen's English rendition of the Persian book, *Badeh-ye 'Ishq* (The Wine of Love), which is a collection of Imam Khomeini's mystical poetry with the appendage of the eight *ghazal* poems in an earlier and smaller collection, *Sabu-ye 'Ishq* (The Jug of Love)⁷ as well as Prof. Legenhausen's *On the Symbolism of Religious Poetry*⁸ as appendix.

International Affairs Department

The Institute for Compilation and Publication

of Imam Khomeini's Works

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1. The great Muslim scholar and jurist, Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sayyid Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr, was born in 1931/1350 AH to a prominent family in Kazimayn, a city in Iraq. He first studied at the Najaf seminary and by the age of twenty he attained the status of theologian and obtained the qualifications to practice religious jurisprudence. He was active in most Islamic movements and in a famous decree, he banned membership in the Ba'ath Party of Iraq and declared the members of this party as outright enemies of Islam and the Muslims. In another decree he proclaimed as martyrs those who fought and were slain in the Islamic Revolution of Iran against the Shah's regime. In the month of Jamad al-Awwal 1400 AH (April 8, 1980), the Ba'ath government of Iraq martyred him and his sister after months of imprisonment and torture. He wrote numerous books, the most famous of which are *Falsafatuna* ("Our Philosophy") and *Iqtisaduna* ("Our Economics"). For the English translation of the two mentioned books, see Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr, *Our Philosophy* (Muhammadi Trust, n.d.), <http://al-islam.org/philosophy> [1] ; *Our Economics* (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1982). (Eds.)
 2. Ja'far ibn Muhammad ('a) entitled, as-Sadiq (The Truthful)," is the sixth Imam from the Prophet's Progeny (83-148 AH). Many of the Sunni and Shi'ah 'ulama and scholars attended his teaching classes and seminars. Narrators of tradition have quoted the number of Imam as-Sadiq's students as four thousand. The socio-economic conditions of his time necessitated greatest efforts to be made by His Holiness in the areas of expanding authentic and original Islamic teachings and in the training and education of faithful students. For this reason the books of tradition and other books quote and cite more traditions from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq than from any other infallible Imams.
 3. In his message of July 20, 1988, commemorating the anniversary of the Meccan Massacre and his acceptance of the Security Council's Resolution 598, Imam Khomeini said: "The acceptance of this resolution is more lethal for me than any poison but I seek the consent of the Lord... In the hope of incurring His pleasure and mercy, I disregarded what I had said and, if I had any honor, I traded it with Almighty God."
 4. 'Izzaddin 'Abdul-Hamid, known as Ibn Abi'l-Hadid" was a statesman of the Abbasid Dynasty and a literary figure and historian (586-655 AH). His major work is the *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, a commentary of the *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Peak of Eloquence) (a compendium of Imam 'Ali's ('a) sermons, letters, and maxims). A full-length English translation and commentary on the *Nahj al-Balaghah* is available on-line at <http://al-islam.org/nahjul/index.htm> [2] (Eds.)
 5. Qur'an 6:79.
 6. See note 40, p. 30 of the present book. (Eds.)
 7. Imam Khomeini, *A Jug of Love*, tr. Muhammad Legenhausen and 'Abdul-'Azim Sarvdalir (Tehran: The Islamic Thought Foundation, 1994). (Eds.)
 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-32. (Eds.)

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