



## The Cultural Significance of the Symbol in Sufi Discourse

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### **Abstract:**

*The symbol is one of the main tools in the Sufi discourse, because the meanings that it carries are built upon special symbols which look like strange messages and marvelous worlds. There are also other general symbols that belong to the side of the religious rituals and ceremonies, which have connection with the ethnic groups, their collective life, and the type of their daily and invisible metaphysical speeches. There is no doubt that many points of similarity exist between the different cultures in the Sufi symbolism, which makes it possible to describe it as the spiritual or Sufi world in general. This study treats the phenomenon of the symbol in the Islamic culture through a group of poetic samples, showing its different manifestations in many examples and in many various eras of Sufi discourses.*

**Keywords:** Discourse, Symbol, Sufism, Poetry, Meaning

### **Résumé :**

*Le symbole est l'un des principaux outils du discours soufi, car les significations qu'il véhicule reposent sur des symboles particuliers qui ressemblent à des messages étranges et à des mondes merveilleux. Il existe également d'autres symboles généraux qui appartiennent au domaine des rituels et des cérémonies religieuses, qui ont un lien avec les groupes ethniques, leur vie collective et le type de discours métaphysiques quotidiens et invisibles qu'ils tiennent. Il ne fait aucun doute qu'il existe de nombreux points communs entre les différentes*

*cultures dans le symbolisme soufi, ce qui permet de le décrire comme le monde spirituel ou soufi en général. Cette étude traite du phénomène du symbole dans la culture islamique à travers un ensemble d'échantillons poétiques, montrant ses différentes manifestations dans de nombreux exemples et à différentes époques des discours soufis.*

**Mots-clés :** Discours, Symbole, Soufisme, Poésie, Signification



## Introduction

It might be useful, before we deal with the symbol in Sufi discourse, to stand at some of the common concepts and meanings of the term (symbol), because of its relation to the study of heritage and meaning. The first thing that we meet concerning this term is what the linguistic scholar Ferdinand de Saussure (F. de Saussure) called the linguistic symbol (Signe), which is composed of two faces: the signifier (Sigifiant), which is the sound image (the word), and the signified (Signifié), which is the conceptual image (the meaning) (Saussure, 1984, pp. 27-87-92). Saussure went further when he supposed a science for the study of symbols, which he called semiology (Sémiologie), and he made language one of its systems.

As for the other concepts of the symbol that fall under the term (Symbole), they are very different. The symbol is used in mathematics, chemistry, and physics, and it also appears in another far aspect among the Sufis, and the masters of rituals, ceremonies, and fortune tellers. Likewise, the symbol takes the character of the preferred term among the analysts and modern psychologists. And if we exclude the literary meanings of the symbol, because they are surrounded by complexity, we can distinguish between two kinds of symbolism, and also two kinds of symbolic use. Symbolism is of two types:

- **Private symbolism.**
- **General symbolism.**

Private symbolism contains a system that belongs to the Sufi person himself, and the specialized researcher can

interpret the private symbolism as one explains the code of a strange message (Wellek & Warren, 1981, p.197). The aim of discovering the private symbolism is to reach the personal implications of the poet, and at the first stage of uncovering it, the statistical method is used. But the general symbolism appears in the use of cultural and traditional symbols; they are many and their aspects are various. The Arab heritage was rich with symbolic sides and cultural givens that were able to deliver what the creator owns in the most accurate and rich artistic ways. The examples of these symbolic sides and givens are a lot, some of which are represented in the mythological and legendary heritages that reached the Arabs before Islam, and they told and circulated their stories. We mention as an example some symbols such as: Wadi 'Abqar and the jinn demons, the ghoul, Shaq and Satih, and the phoenix... etc. (Qaddour, 1986, p.33).

Also, the proverbs and the popular heritage present a symbolic richness filled with mythological and historical characters, which indicate easily meanings connected with anthropology, ethnology, and folklore. In addition to that, there is another aspect of these givens which is the religious aspect, because it contains many events and characters, and various intellectual doctrines and behavioral paths. What is observed in this aspect is that the Sufi heritage is considered one of the most elements that the contemporary poets employed, because it is full of symbols, terms, and distinguished characters.

What can also be included in this side, in relation to the subject and the continuity among poets, is what concerns the Christian religion, especially what relates to the Christ. It might be useful here to explain something related to the Christ, which is the appearance of this symbol and the



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reactions that faced it. It is interesting that some critics, who were counted among the modernists, demanded the prohibition of poetry where mythological and Christian symbols appear (Al-'Azmah, 1972, p.177). It seems that the use of the symbol of Christ was the motive behind that strictness, but the true interpretation is that the modern poet is concerned with the cultural meanings and what human meanings can be derived from them, and he often passes through their religious content, moving them from the literal meaning to the suggestive and symbolic ones.

As for the symbolic use, it is – as it is known – not limited to the Symbolist school (Symbolisme), which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, precisely in 1885, and not limited also – in its side related to general symbolism – to Eliot and his contemporary poets. Because the general symbolic use can also exist in ancient poetry, as it is in modern poetry. Some modern studies have shown that the ancient poets used many mythological symbols and cultural elements (Graham, 1973, p.13). On this basis, the use of the term (general symbol), or (traditional symbol), or (general symbolism), by the meaning that we have explained before, does not contradict the term (cultural meaning). Rather, it represents a more specific expression than the term (cultural meaning), because this term includes all forms of artistic usage, from the simplest one – which is the literal quotation in the single word that belongs to a cultural side – to the most complex, which is the mythological symbol and the creation of myth itself, a form that depends on deriving the mythological atmosphere and its characters, and building a new image both in form and in function (Qaddour, 1986, p.37).

Most of the forms related to heritage have undoubtedly remained, for modern poets, especially the pioneers of the Neo-Classic trend, within the formal side, without connection with the intellectual aspects. And with the appearance of the Diwan group and the Apollo school, the treatment of heritage effects in poetry began to take another form from one side, and extended to a foreign heritage from another side, so it is noticeable that a number of poets derived Greek and Roman mythological data, and these are data which they had cultivated through foreign languages. Some of these poets were composing the myths and repeating them in their poetry, transferred as they are, with no addition in them, and some of them were imitating the Greek poets in addressing the Muses and the gods of poetry and love and beauty. Some critics and scholars have noticed the spread of mythological allusions in the poetry of Al-'Aqqad and the poetry of Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi, and among that is what Khalil Mutran criticized in Abu Shadi, who exaggerated in his concern with historical allusions, technical symbols, foreign names, and the interest in mythology (Al-Desouqi, 1971, p.330).

However, this treatment of heritage elements – even if it appears different from the previous forms – was below the ideal treatment that gives them an artistic value in poetry; for the use was directed to narrating the heritage and versifying it sometimes in its own text. For this reason some researchers noticed that most of the poets who belong to the renovation trend used to go to telling myths and inherited stories in an easy style and very clear rhythms, without creating suitable contexts for them, or inserting them into the scope of the emotional poetic experience (Al-Batal, 1982, pp.44-48). The artistic use of the heritage symbol did not



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become stable except after the abundance of models presented by the pioneers of free verse, such as Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, who began to use it seriously starting from his collection "Unshudat al-Matar" (Hymn of the Rain) (Al-Karim, 1983, pp.175-227). Some scholars have noticed that, and they tried to define this phenomenon on the basis of rules and criteria, the most important of which are: connecting these symbols with the present and with the experience that uses them, and creating the suitable context for the symbol, because we do not rely on the power of the symbol itself as much as we rely on the context that contains it (Ismail, 1981, p.181).

And after this brief presentation of the common concepts and meanings of the term "symbol", it is suitable now to clarify the foundations of the cultural meaning of the symbol.

### **1- The Foundations of the Cultural Meaning of the Symbol in This Study:**

In this study we try to employ the theory of semantic components, starting from what was proposed by the author of the book "Componential Analysis of Meaning", the linguist Eugene Nida (E. A. Nida), who suggests that we should be concerned with analyzing words into their basic elements, especially when we deal, in interpretation, with figurative meanings that result from the process of selecting one semantic element or component or more from the meaning of the word (Omar, 1982, pp.121-129). So the analysis of the context of the word "Al-Injil" (the Gospel) in the verse of Al-Akhtal Al-Saghir, in the context of talking

about Gibran and what the man of letters suffers in this age, where he says: (Qumeiha, 1982, p.388)

Suppose you are Gibran, and he is the Gospel of this

\*\*\*

age whose verses overflow with lights.

This reveals to us that the coming of the word "Injil" occurs with two meanings: one of them goes back to the real meaning of the Holy Book, the Gospel, which is an old Arabized word, and it is thought that its origin is Greek and that its meaning is "good news" (Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit, 2004, entry: Anjal). The second is the implicative or metaphorical meaning, which branches from the real meaning, and the following scheme points to that:

Signifier (Injil / Gospel) ← First signified (the Book revealed to Jesus and sacred for his followers)  
Signifier (Injil / Gospel) ← Second signified (holiness, light, and wisdom).

So the implicative or metaphorical meaning aims at the most important semantic components of the meaning of the word "Injil", which are: holiness, light, high rank, argument and wisdom. Another researcher may return this use to an old rhetorical form which is the "intensive simile" (al-tashbih al-baleeg), but the semantic analysis reveals an important side that remains hidden when we resort to traditional rhetoric, and that is the cultural meaning, by returning this implicative use to a word that has a cultural meaning. Perhaps the following example makes this clearer; Al-Akhtal Al-Saghir says in a poem for him entitled "Abu Al-Ala'" (Qumeiha, 1982, p.156):

The smile of mockery, where are from it Abu Baħr

\*\*\* and Voltaire, the master of the mockers?

I do not know, are you in your description of the self

right, or is it the wise Ibn Sina?





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Does the dove of paradise see it from the fluttering of  
eternity \*\*\* and remain for you only water and clay?  
The secret of this soul, neither Rome's ink \*\*\* has  
realized it, nor the sheikhs of Athens.

Thus, it is noticeable that the cultural references are so crowded that the language almost becomes a pure culture; the verses begin with al-Ma'arri's own images which rise above the methods of al-Jahiz and Voltaire (d. 1778), and these two scholars have properties that indicate wisdom, knowledge, the rebellious individual temperament, and the lack of reconciliation with reality, and then the poet refers to a deeper significance, which is the pursuit of philosophers and wise men to uncover the hidden aspects of the self and its secrets, and the poet resorts to that by a reference to the poem of the sage and the shaykh al-ra'is Ibn Sina whose opening is: (Usaybi'ah, 1965, p. 446)

She descended to you from the highest place \*\*\* A  
cooing dove with coquettishness and reluctance

The semantic analysis of the cultural references in the previous verses shows that the poet does not stop at the limits of the Arab heritage culture, but rather uses what he has learned from the knowledge of the present age, trying to establish the connection between the cultural references through the unity of the subject, which is al-Ma'arri's philosophy and his views on the universe and the soul, and the lexemes that can be subjected to semantic analysis are: Abu Bahr (al-Jahiz) and the French Voltaire the writer and philosopher and Ibn Sina the sage, scientist and philosopher. After this analysis, it can be said that the term cultural significance, as one of the axes of semantic analysis, is not limited to one aspect of the heritage, but rather takes a comprehensive cultural direction, through which it traces

modern cultures and their symbols and their new myths (Qaddour, 1986, p. 35).

## **2- Applications on Sufi poetry:**

And if we move to the Sufi poetic experience and we seek the cultural significance of the symbol in it, we do not find in this field of semantic and literary studies what encourages us to plunge into this subject; for most of those who dealt with the Sufi text did not go beyond "extracting what is philosophical ideological, such as *hulul* and *wahdat al-wujud*, *fana'* and the Muhammadan reality and the stations and the states, from what is poetic, and whoever tried to uncover the style of Sufi poetic writing remained hovering around the types of symbols, like the woman, the wine, the ruin... and it is not believed that anyone tried to go beyond this traditional approach in analyzing Sufi poetry with the many things that the structuralist and stylistic method and the theory of reading provide of mechanisms to monitor phenomena such as textual interactions in the Sufi discourse and to analyze them" (Balla'la, 2001, p. 6).

The one who contemplates the Sufi discourse notices that love, as a symbol among the Sufis, remained the wide space in which they practiced the relation of servitude which they assumed is – originally – a relation of love, relying in that on a hadith they assumed is a sacred hadith received by the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, from God, whose text is as follows: "I was a hidden treasure and was not known, so I loved to be known, so I created creation, and by it they knew Me" (Arabi, p. 1). And the poems of the Sufis reflected this love in various images and forms, which may reach for some of them the degree of ambiguity; as al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309 AH) tried to embody



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love in verses in which he expressed the pre-eternity of passion in the human being before the existence of the human being, and he said: (al-Hallaj, 1974, p. 18)

His attributes from Him, in Him, are not originated  
\*\*\* And the originated thing is that whose beginning  
is things

Passion is in the pre-eternity of eternities from  
ancientness \*\*\* In it, by it, from it, it appears, in it, an  
appearing

Passion is not an event if it is an attribute \*\*\* From  
the attributes of the one whose killers are alive

When the beginning appeared, He made His passion  
appear as an attribute \*\*\* In what appeared, a shining  
sway in it appears

And if the subject of any discourse does not appear except if certain conditions allow it, which must be available so that the subject engages with the rest of the subjects in a time period and within a culture in terms of relations of similarity or generation or dialogue, then the subject of love among the Sufis in the third century did not live a situation previous to its existence, for Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya preceded them in confessing her love for God by saying:

I love you with two loves: a love of desire \*\*\* And a  
love because you are worthy of that  
So as for that which is the love of desire \*\*\* It is my  
being occupied with your remembrance from whoever  
is other than you

And as for that which you are worthy of \*\*\* It is your  
lifting for me of the veils until I see you  
So there is no praise in this or that for me \*\*\* But for  
you is the praise in this and that

And if Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya declares in these verses that she does not worship God out of fear of His Fire, nor out of desire for His Paradise, but rather she worships Him

because He is worthy of servitude, then al-Hallaj declares that he does not love God out of desire for His reward nor out of fear of His punishment, but rather he worships Him for the torment in which he enjoys, where he says: (al-Hallaj, 1974, p. 68)

I want You, I do not want You for the reward \*\*\* But  
rather I want You for the punishment  
So all my desires I have obtained from them \*\*\*  
Except the delight of my ecstasy in the torment

There is no doubt that the recipient of this discourse will make it stop “at the first mechanisms of contradiction which the Sufi discourse created with the owner of religious knowledge of utilitarian convictions which stipulate the usefulness of the discourse and its benefit, and therefore the horizon of expectation conflicted with the elements of this new discourse based on relations that contradict, at least apparently, the current meaning about the relation of love between the human being and God, and does not pay attention to a certain rhetorical formation” (Balla’la, 2001, p. 24).

And if some scholars have interpreted this relation as a premeditated call to abolish religious obligation, represented in acts of worship and other things which the Shari’a has made obligatory, they have not, on the other hand, uncovered the cause hidden behind this call. And if we go beyond this, we notice that this relation of love, in the case of al-Hallaj, has turned into a unifying, preventing force, encompassing everything and generating everything; for by it there is the inclination and attraction, which is the will to act, and by it attachment and its perception are accomplished, and by it “the created power by which the conscience speaks and through which address in eternity is achieved, and it is the tongue of the incoming and the



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inspiration and some kinds of revelation, and it is the secret voice or its place in some way" (Yasser, 1983, p. 173).

And it is not strange that the act of love is connected with poetry among the Sufis, given the latent interaction and communication that the act of love and poetry guarantees, considering that the units of poetic informing are "elements that seek to organize the structure and control it according to metric and rhythmic criteria that may sometimes be more influential on the recipient than the meaning that the poetic structure reveals; they are units that largely control the interaction existing between the source and the destination; indeed, they may be the basic element from which this interaction springs" (Idris, 1995, p. 274).

The Sufis established their relations with God on a basis that tends toward directness and the transcending of intermediaries, even the mediation of consciousness in its familiar concept, which made the recipient at that time not accept this discourse in which everything reveals an excessive explosiveness of the ego toward God (Balla'la, 2001, p. 26), as the following verses of al-Hallaj reflect: (al-Hallaj, 1974, p. 55)

I am the one I love, and the one I love is I \*\*\* We are  
two spirits that have settled in one body  
We have, since we were on the covenant of love \*\*\*  
Become proverbs that are cited to people about us  
So if you see me, you see Him \*\*\* And if you see  
Him,                      you                      see                      us  
His spirit is my spirit and my spirit is His spirit \*\*\*  
Who has seen two spirits that have settled in one  
body?

The practice of love in this sense is an inner act that practically parallels the external practical behavior and surpasses it, as long as the external behavior keeps what

separates us from God; therefore, the first manifestations of this tendency are the explosion of the ego and the explosion of language with its explosion (28), where “the ego is another, *Je est un autre*, and this means that existence can be, from the subjective side, something, and from the objective side, something else, its opposite. So existence is itself and its other at the same time, like the ego which is ‘I’ and ‘another’ together” (Adonis, 1989, p. 40). And perhaps what also reflects this explosion, in a striking way, is the following poetic piece of al-Hallaj, in which he says: (al-Hallaj, 1974, p. 26)

I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart \*\*\* So I said:  
 Who are You? He said: You  
 So there is no where for You from You \*\*\* And no  
 “where” is such that You are there  
 And there is no illusion concerning You from You  
 \*\*\* So let illusion know where You are?!  
 You are the One who has encompassed every “where”  
 \*\*\* In a manner of “no where”, so where are You?  
 In my annihilation is the annihilation of my  
 annihilation \*\*\* And in my annihilation I found You  
 In the lines of my senses and the drawing of my body  
 \*\*\* I asked about me, I said: You  
 My secret pointed to You until \*\*\* I vanished from  
 myself and You remained  
 You are my life and the secret of my heart \*\*\* So  
 wherever I was, You were You

This explosion has, at the semantic level, exploded the traditional relation between words, the means of metaphor, and the transparency of continuity, and therefore the Sufi discourse in the poetry of the Sufis, especially in the poetry of al-Hallaj, has quantitatively responded to this epistemological situation (Balla’la, 2001, p. 27). And all that al-Hallaj accomplished, “regardless of the expressive form to which it belongs, is this boundless overflow, an excessive,



immeasurable speech that becomes embarrassing by its mere existence, opening in the wall of languages gaps through which another light flows from another world which is the very Now, and the function of language is mediation between the two worlds, just like the king who delivers the message, so truth is neither extravagance nor exaggeration" (Sami, 1989, p. 11).

The semantic analysis of the terms and symbols found in this poetic piece, such as annihilation, effacement, "where", and the use of the divine Self in a kind of exchange with the human self, and other things that sometimes embarrass the recipient, reveals a transformation of the concepts current among the Sufis into a kind of absolute excess which cannot be understood except by considering these concepts as messages that are open to interpretation, and it is not necessary to say that mere excess in absoluteness is what led to the effacement of the role of the recipient and the non-achievement of accord between him and the Sufi, yet those concepts of the relation with God, which are the aims of the Sufis, shortened the distance between them, and it was possible for the recipient to project the ready-made meaning onto the poetry of al-Hallaj, to remove the conflict, as happened with some other Sufis contemporary with al-Hallaj, like Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 245 AH), al-Bistami (d. 261 AH), al-Nuri (d. 295 AH), al-Shibli (d. 334 AH), and others (Balla'la, 2001, p. 33).

And if we try to take some poetic examples to uncover the cultural significance of the symbol in them, we do not find them far from the discourse of al-Hallaj which caused a shaking in the familiar context of the relation of the human being with God, so this al-Bistami, for example, formulates

his discourse within the context of what they have termed *hulul* and *fana'*, for which al-Hallaj was fought, where he says:

Your distance from me is your nearness \*\*\* You took  
me away from you by your meaning  
Descriptions do not differentiate between us \*\*\* If it  
is said to me "you", I was "you"

And in this same context al-Sahljaji says: (al-Sahljaji,  
1978, p. 131)

I remembered you, not that I forgot you for a moment  
\*\*\* And the easiest part of remembrance is the  
remembrance of my tongue

And I almost, without ecstasy, died of passion \*\*\*

And the heart became ecstatic with throbbing  
So when ecstasy showed me that you are my present

\*\*\* I witnessed you as existent in every place  
I address one existent without speaking \*\*\* And I  
observed one known without physical seeing

The Sufi discourse has left a huge stock of knowledge and concepts which they expressed in terms that are like symbols that refer to the Sufi experience, and the authority in the third century opposed the symbol and weakened its power by killing al-Hallaj, but it could not annihilate it as long as it had left the field wide open to expose these symbols to explanation and interpretation throughout the fourth and fifth centuries; for the atmosphere suggested the formation of a path of reception that would be commensurate with the pressures to which the Sufi discourse was subjected in the third century, and this path began – as we have seen – with an analytical character, whose mark is the interpretation and clarification of all the sayings of the ancients, which constituted a cognitive system by means of which they tried to communicate with others, yet that cognitive load was beyond the capacity of the communicative channel





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represented by language, which the Sufis described as expression, and they resorted to what they called indication, which is not connected to the channel as much as it is connected to the sender and his intention (Balla'la, 2001, pp. 55-56).

And if the symbol of love in the poems of the Sufis in general, and of al-Hallaj in particular, is an immersion in love which they expressed by annihilation, it is, in the case of Ibn 'Arabi and other later ones, an immersion in the scenes of absolute divine beauty in the world, and from here the symbolism of the image embodied by the discourse of love poetry or wine, and of tajalli as a concept and witnessing, can be understood, which allowed the Sufis to see the world, despite the symbolic nature of its forms, as extremely beautiful, because it represents the phenomenon of divinity which is nothing but the very entities of the forms of existents, according to the Sufis, and God is beautiful and loves beauty, and He is the One who made this world in His likeness, and therefore the essence of God's manifestations in this existence is itself the meaning of divine beauty, and here the woman emerges as a symbol of the Sufi's fascination with existence and his longing for his origins (Balla'la, 2001, pp. 67-68). Ibn 'Arabi says in this sense: (Arabi, 1994, pp. 154-155)

She appeared at Adhri'at, and my sight saw \*\*\* A girl  
of ten and four, a full moon  
She has risen above time in majesty \*\*\* And has risen  
above it in pride and greatness  
Every full moon, when it reaches its limit \*\*\* Its  
deficiency comes, in order to complete a month  
Except this one, for she has no movements \*\*\* In  
constellations, so that she intercedes as an odd  
A small vessel in which ambergris and perfume were

deposited \*\*\* A garden that has grown spring and flowers

Beauty has reached in you its utmost extent \*\*\* The capacity of possibility has no other like you

Rather, Ibn 'Arabi goes further than this when he connects between witnessing beauty and fascination with it, and the necessity that the Sufi pass through a similar experience in the sensory world, just as happened to him with the daughter of his shaykh in Mecca, where he says: "The human being does not have delight flow in his whole being, nor does he annihilate through witnessing something with his entirety, nor do love and passion flow in his nature and spirituality except if he loves a young woman... So if the divine manifestation occurs in the very image on which Adam was created, the meaning will match, and delight with the whole will occur, and desire will flow in all parts of the human being outwardly... Therefore, whoever knows the value of women and their secret does not abstain from loving them; rather, loving them is part of the perfection of the gnostic, because it is a prophetic inheritance according to the hadith... and in that it is a divine love, because our love for woman brings us closer to God" (Arabi, p. 189). Thus, woman becomes a symbol of the divine truth and, at the same time, a refutation of the prevailing belief which, since the pre-Islamic era, has turned woman into a beautiful image of which only that part limited to this sexual ecstasy is presented.

And whoever follows Persian Sufi poetry finds many kinds and concepts of poetry that all enter within the framework of symbol and metaphor, and among the Sufi poetic examples that abound in that is what we now present, so that we may see what the inspirations of Sufi poets overflow with toward these Sufi terms and symbolisms, and



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among these is Shaykh Najm Dayya, who says what its translation is: (Al-'Abadi, 2002, p. 124)

We are still drunk from wine  
And we are still drunk also since long ago  
The hermitage: with the scriptures, the prayer rug, and  
the rose

And we are still drinkers to the point of intoxication,  
and revelers and worshipers of wine

And in this sense the poet Farid al-Din al-'Attar says  
what its translation is: (Al-'Abadi, 2002, p. 124)

In the mosque I used to know the idol-maker from the  
idol

And now, in this tavern of the revelers, I do not know  
the idol from the idol-maker

And Hafez al-Shirazi, addressing his Beloved on the  
Night of Power in his poem, says what its translation is: (Al-  
'Abadi, 2002, p. 136)

I do not want to leave the ruby-like Beloved and the  
cup of wine

So excuse me, O ascetics, for this is my doctrine

And about the concept of effacement, which is  
intended by the Sufis as purification and avoiding, far from  
the traces of works, the poet Muzaffar al-Kirmanî says what  
its translation is: (Al-'Abadi, 2002, p. 169)

Effacement is drunkenness, and sobriety is perception,  
And that is heedlessness, and this is wakefulness  
Do not say "two", and do not know "two", and do not  
read "two",

And efface the servant in the essence of his Master,  
For the Master is also created by the light of his  
Master,

So he is the annihilated, the dead, the non-existent,  
and the buried.

And about the reality of time, which is intended by the  
Sufis as that state that comes upon the wayfarer, such as love

in God the Exalted, trust, submission, contentment, and other things, the poet 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jami says what its translation is: (Al-'Abadi, 2002, pp. 183–184)

Come, O cupbearer, and bring that pure cup,  
Which effaces color and the nonsense of scent from  
the heart,

For in every place a light falls from His image,  
It packs falsehood's baggage to distant parasangs,  
O singer, come, for that is the time of song,  
And recite this melody with the Rast mode.

## **Conclusion:**

The analysis of the cultural significance of the symbol contained in these poetic examples reveals that wine poems cannot be understood as aiming at material wine, which is drunk in a cup or a goblet, even if their outward meaning indicates that; therefore, these symbols are nothing more than metonymies for meanings which they conceal within themselves, so the cup, for example, for them is the face of the Beloved who has surpassed every beauty and charm, and the goblet is His eye with which He looks at the face of this Beloved, so His beauty fills it just as the goblet is filled with wine, and the Beloved in the poems of these people is the divine beauty, which is one of the attributes of God, and to which every soul aspires that becomes intoxicated with the wine of divine love (Al-'Abadi, 2002, p. 184).

And there is no doubt that these symbols, philosophical concepts, and Sufi references, with which Sufi poetic experiences in both their Arabic and Persian forms are crowded, have played a great role in elevating these literatures to the rank of world literatures.



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