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**Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi**

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**Abstract**

Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi (d. 1129 AH), one of the great poets of the Safavid era, is regarded as a devoted lover of the Ahl al-Bayt (as). He dedicated a considerable part of his *Divan* to the praise of the Twelve Imams (as), and many of his other poems likewise reflect Shiite beliefs and teachings. Although literary critics do not generally consider the Safavid period and the Indian or Isfahani style to represent the height of Persian language and literature, there is no doubt that Shiite poets performed remarkably well during this era, and Ta'siri Tabrizi is a clear example of this phenomenon. This article, based on library research and the use of primary sources, employs a descriptive-analytical method to show that this Shiite poet expressed his heartfelt devotion to the pure Imams (as) with utmost sincerity. Even if strong and weak poems appear side by side in his *Divan*, he nevertheless left behind a readable and valuable collection of Shiite poetry and literature. He also benefited from knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith, and other Islamic sciences, all of which he employed effectively in his poetry, and he followed the history of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) with deep enthusiasm. His most delicate and refined poems are among the 1,397 ghazals he composed with mystical and romantic themes, following the Iraqi style and poets such as Hafez and Saeb (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

**Keywords:** Shiite Poetry, Ahl al-Bayt (as), Twelve Imams (as), Indian Style, Safavid Era.



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## 1. Introduction

Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi (1060–1131 AH) was a poet who lived and composed during the Safavid era (907–1148 AH) and was deeply influenced by the literary atmosphere of that period. Persian poetry of this era has been less studied, and scholars have not paid sufficient attention to it. The Isfahani or Indian style represents a significant period in Persian literature, marked by events and transformations in which both positive and negative factors played important roles (Safa, 2010, p. 18).

In the Khorasani style, rulers supported poets extensively and attached great importance to their cultivation. One of the defining characteristics of poets of that era was therefore their dependence on the court. However, with the Mongol invasion and the ensuing chaos and insecurity, such patronage declined. Poetry moved away from the court and assemblies of nobles and upper classes toward the people, the streets, and the bazaar, thereby becoming closer to the language and everyday life of ordinary people. This tendency became even more pronounced during the Safavid era. Poetry did not merely descend “from the throne to the carpet”; rather, the established ideals of classical poetry weakened, and themes and meanings became increasingly popularized. Although the number of outstanding masterpieces may have decreased, the voice of the people and popular thought found greater resonance in urban culture. While the praise of kings and rulers did not disappear, folk culture became more prominent.

One of the popular themes warmly welcomed by poets—with the support of both government and people—was the elegy and praise of religious figures, particularly the emphasis on Shiite religious identity. Praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) increasingly entered poetic discourse and at times came to occupy a major part of poets' works. A new style and method became widespread, and through the innovations of figures such as Mohtasham Kashani (905–996 AH), it developed into a broad literary and poetic genre. At the same time, other literary tendencies also advanced, particularly through the support of the Mughal courts in India for Iranian poets and the consolidation of the Indian style. For example, during the reign of Akbar Shah Gurkani, fifty-one Iranian poets traveled to India and were welcomed at the court. In the works of most of these poets, one finds originality of subject matter, subtlety, and complexity. In such a broad literary environment, elegy also found its place among the people and in religious gatherings (Safa, 1994; Zarrinkoub, 1980).

Shiite poets such as Ta'siri Tabrizi demonstrate in their poems that they were mirrors of the culture of their age. Since belief in the Ahl al-Bayt (as) had spread throughout society and occupied a central place in the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the people, this poet—while being personally



devoted to these ideals—also reflected the dominant social tendency. From the themes found in the poems of such poets, which include Islamic and Shiite teachings ranging from Qur’anic verses and Ḥadiths to narratives of historical and religious events and expressions of praise and reverence for the pure Imams (as), one can discern the central concerns of the society of that era. In Ta’siri Tabrizi’s poems, various poetic forms are employed to express Shiite ideas, and priority is given to fulfilling a religious and ideological mission through the articulation of Shiite beliefs. This type of poetry may, in fact, be understood as a response to the needs and expectations of the people of that period, with the poet acting as a spokesman for collective religious sentiment.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Since the first century of Islam, expressions of sincere devotion toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) have appeared in Arabic, Persian, and other neighboring languages. In the Safavid period, however, this tendency reached a peak, and Shiite poetry became a central focus for many poets. This inclination toward the Ahl al-Bayt (as) has often been interpreted merely as a result of the Safavid Shiite state, whereas other factors should also be taken into consideration. Indeed, the tendency toward Shiite poetry existed beyond the Safavid state, and one of the historical factors behind it was the rule of governments affiliated with the Abbasid Caliphate before the Mongol invasion, which were often severe toward Shiites. With the Mongol invasion, an opportunity emerged for Shiites to express their views more openly, and this issue requires further study.

In the poems of Ta’siri Tabrizi, praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) lies at the center of his poetic themes, and this article seeks to demonstrate that fact. An evaluation of these poems shows that the poet created such themes with sincerity and heartfelt conviction. Since all of his poems possess a religious dimension, they reflect his inner concern with Islamic and Shiite teachings (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994).

Poets who regarded themselves as committed to the expression of belief did not subscribe to the notion of “art for art’s sake”; rather, they adhered to the idea of art in the service of faith. They focused on the expression of doctrine and conviction in poetry rather than on the creation of poetry for purely aesthetic purposes. One of the principal criticisms leveled against such poets concerns weakness in artistic and literary refinement: they may have become so immersed in expressing their mission that they could not always produce works of the highest artistic level. This criticism can be extended to other art forms as well. Shiite literature and mystical literature contain many poetic collections in which the poet regarded himself as charged with the mission of expressing belief, and the importance of those



ideals often placed artistic expression in a secondary position. This article shows that Ta'siri Tabrizi gave priority to ideological and devotional themes because of his faith and love for the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

### 3. Research Background

No independent research appears to have been conducted specifically on the place of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi; however, several studies have examined other dimensions of his poetry. Among them are the article "Historical References to the City of Isfahan in the Divan of Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Amin Pasha Ejlali, published in the *Journal of the Faculty of Literature of Tabriz University* (no. 153, 1373); the article "Reflection of Moral Concepts in the Lyric Poems of Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Leila Adl Parvar and Razieh Aghazadeh, presented at the International Conference on Persian Language and Literature in Hamedan (2010); the article "The Manifestation of the Qur'an in the Divan of Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by the same authors, presented at the International Conference on Language Studies in Tehran (2010); and the article "A Close Analysis of Novel Spiritual Arrangements in the Divan of Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Razieh Aghazadeh, published in *Baharestan Sokhan Quarterly* (no. 50, 1399).

The poet's *Divan* was carefully published by the University Publishing Center in 1994, edited by Amin Pasha Ejlali. In addition, the book *Sholeh Awaz: Introduction and Selected Poems of Ta'siri Tabrizi* by Seyyed Mohammad Abbasieh Kohan was published by Qo Publishing in 2009. An article by Hossein Agha Nakhjavani introducing this poet was published in *Faculty of Literature, University of Tabriz* (no. 1, 1965). An entry in the *Great Islamic Encyclopedia* under "Ta'siri Tabrizi" by Ali Mirza Ansari is also available. Brief but useful information about him can also be found in a number of tazkiras and biographical anthologies, including *Tazkirat al-Ma'asirin* by Mohammad Ali Hazin (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169), the *Tazkira* of Mohammad Tahir Nasrabadi (Nasrabadi, 1361, vol. 1, p. 119), *Atashkadeh* of Lotf Ali Azar (Azar, 1340, vol. 3, p. 327), *Daneshmandane Azerbaijan* by Mohammad Ali Tarbiat (Tarbiat, 1314, vol. 1, p. 77), *Safineh-ye Khoshgu* (Khoshgoo, 1959, vol. 1, p. 94), and *Sahaf-e Ibrahim* (Khalil, 1389, vol. 1, p. 35).

### 4. Introducing Mirza Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi

Mohsen Ta'siri Tabrizi was born in Isfahan, although his paternal grandfather, Abolkhan Tabrizi, and his maternal grandfather, Mohammad Hossein Chalabi, were both prominent figures from Tabriz. Shah Abbas I transferred them from Tabriz to Isfahan and settled them in the Abbasabad neighborhood. Thus, this poet was educated in Isfahan and studied under Agha Hossein Khansari (d. 1098 AH) and Mohammad Tahir Qazvini,



known by the pen name Vahid (d. 1120 AH). From an early age, he had the opportunity to associate with poets such as Saeb Tabrizi (d. 1081 AH), to practice poetry, and to participate in literary gatherings alongside Hazin Lahiji. In middle age, he entered government service and was for some time responsible for the financial affairs of Yazd. It is possible that his official appointments were related to his panegyrics for Shah Suleiman (d. 1078 AH), Shah Sultan Husayn (d. 1140 AH), and several ministers of that government. After 1120 AH, when he was dismissed from office, he retired into seclusion in Isfahan and devoted himself to poetic composition (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169; Nasrabadi, 1361, vol. 1, p. 119; Azar, 1340, vol. 3, p. 927; Tarbiat, 1314, vol. 1, p. 77). Few detailed reports about his life are available.

From a literary perspective, Hazin's opinion is noteworthy, as he remarks that Ta'siri's poetry was approaching perfection, though his lifetime did not permit its full completion (Hazin, 1375, vol. 1, p. 169). Ali Ibrahim Khalil also regarded his poems as containing fresh themes in the style of later poets (Khalil, 1389, vol. 1, p. 35). His poetry also found admirers in India, including figures such as Hussein Shohrat (d. 1149 AH) and Sirajuddin Arzoo (Khoshgoo, 1959, vol. 1, p. 94).

His major literary work is his *Divan*, which includes qasidas, *tarkib-bands*, fragments, and masnavis such as *Jahan-Nama*, *Minhaj al-Mi'raj*, *Da'wat al-'Ashiqin*, *Golzar-e Sadat*, *Samarat al-Hijab*, *Hasan Ittifaq*, *Maimanat-Nameh*, and *Towfiq Risalah al-Muma*. It also contains ghazals, miscellaneous poems, and rubaiyat. Two complete manuscripts are preserved in the Majles Library (no. 957) and the Sepahsalar School Library (no. 2832), both in broken and mature Nastaliq script. Two additional copies with slight differences also exist. These materials were published in 1994 by the University Publishing Center through the efforts of Amin Pasha Ejlali, along with useful annotations and indexes (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

Regarding Ta'siri's thought, it must be remembered that he studied Islamic teachings ranging from Qur'anic exegesis and Ḥadith to jurisprudence within the Shiite scholarly environment of the Safavid period. He was so committed to Shiite beliefs that some have regarded him as a strict or ardent Shiite. His love and heartfelt devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (as) are clearly manifest in his poems, and he composed especially moving verses on the tragedy of Karbala. He also repeatedly expresses his eagerness to visit the shrines of the pure Imams (as). After praise of God and the Holy Prophet (pbuh), the main themes of his poetry are devoted to the family of infallibility and purity, and he frequently employs Qur'anic and Ḥadith-based allusions. His two masnavis on the Prophet's Ascension



stand out for their eloquence and poetic beauty in the *Divan*. His devotion to Imam Ali (as) is especially prominent, and he speaks of that Imam and the other pure Imams in a language full of love and reverence (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).

He loved Imam Ali (as) to such an extent that he seems to have been accused of exaggeration, as suggested in the line: "If he exaggerates, he is not precious in Ali's love." In other words, while he openly acknowledges his sincere devotion to that Imam, he does not regard such love as blameworthy. One of the major themes of his poetry is Islamic and Shiite mysticism. Especially in his ghazals, he speaks of the necessity of purifying the soul, severing attachment to all but God, and pursuing the path of truth through sincerity and spiritual discipline. He also composed graceful poems on the unity of being and the exalted station of the heart in mysticism. He refers to mystical states such as submission, contentment, absence, presence, poverty, the dervish robe, the old Magian, audition, and ecstasy. His poems indicate that he underwent long periods of travel, ascetic practice, and retreat, and even chose a life of seclusion for a time. Among mystical themes, he pays particular attention to "trust in God," and he also offers reflections on education and moral cultivation. His references to astronomy, medicine, accounting, logic, and related sciences in his poetry could themselves become the subject of separate study.

In poetic style, he follows the great masters of Persian literature. In qasida, he often imitates Saadi, Anvari, Khaqani, and Naziri, and even incorporates their verses into his own poetry. His *tarkib-bands* imitate Mohtasham Kashani, and in elegy he proceeds in the manner of other major poets of the Safavid era. In masnavi, he follows Nezami Ganjavi. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that he sometimes displays innovative themes and something of his own individual style. Critics have pointed out weak themes and awkward lines in his poetry, yet his fresh similes and original expressions should not be underestimated. At times, his poetry exhibits the complexity of the Isfahani style, and the quality of his poems is not always uniform. On the other hand, he also has simple and fluent verses, and his relative freedom from narrow prejudice is noteworthy. He sometimes speaks of philosophical and mystical concepts in an acceptable manner and frequently employs rhetorical devices. Despite the criticisms directed at him, he also coined new expressions and compounds such as *New Need*, *Baran Khodpa*, *Khordan Dushman*, *Be Heel Nazeer*, *Haft Josh Hafte*, and *Setam Zarif*, which should be counted among his innovations. He has many beautiful and mystical ghazals in which he demonstrates considerable poetic power (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994).



## 5. Shiite Poetry in the Safavid Era

Researchers often do not consider the Safavid era a period marked by strong support for the Persian language and its promotion within Iran, yet they do acknowledge the expansion of Shiite poetry during that time. As Safa notes, “The Safavid era was not a favorable period for the Persian language and literature in Iran. Due to the attention paid to Persian speakers in the Ottoman Empire and among the Iranians, Turks, and Mongols of Central Asia, especially through the efforts of great scholars and rulers in India, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries AH can be regarded as among the best periods of the spread and popularity of this language in Asia. Naturally, this greatly contributed to the abundance of writings and poems by writers and poets, and caused the Safavid era to become one of the most fertile periods in the history of Persian literature” (Safa, 2010, p. 18; Safa, 1994, vol. 5, p. 422).

Many scholars have repeated the criticism that Persian received less attention in Safavid Iran, while Persian literature flourished in neighboring Persianate regions. They have, however, offered differing explanations for this phenomenon. One such critic writes: “With the rise of Shah Ismail, who himself and his tribesmen were Turkic-speaking and did not show special interest in Persian, the development of the Persian language became slow and limited. On the other hand, the extensive attention paid by all Safavid kings to religious scholars did not provide much opportunity for poetry and belles-lettres, especially since many Shiite scholars and jurists at the beginning of this era were Arabs from Lebanon or Jabal ‘Amil, and due to their religiosity and strictness, they were opposed to the mystical taste and Sufism that had long been among the foundations of Persian poetry” (Zarrinkoub, 1980, p. 254).

In any case, the Shiite poetic collections of the Safavid era demonstrate that poetry, literature, and art cannot simply be suppressed; whenever one path is closed, another opens. Persian language and literature preserved themselves under all circumstances, and poets and thinkers strengthened literary expression in diverse forms and genres. Although patronage rose and fell, and some avenues were blocked while others emerged, the language ultimately continued its flourishing course.

In criticism of the poetry of this period, it has been said that the ghazal lost much of its romantic nature and became oriented toward theology, philosophy, ethics, Sufism, and similar concerns, and that in the Indian or Isfahani style intellectual contradiction reached such a point that one hemistich could negate the next (Shafi‘i Kadkani, 1999, p. 52). Some have even called the poetry of this era a “great loss” (Toghiani, 2006, p. 78). Yet Persian poetry continued to live and develop along the paths opened before



it; it did not suffer true loss simply because it passed through periods of weakness and strength. If, in the Safavid era, praise of the virtues and excellences of the pure Imams (as) became popular in accordance with the custom of the time, poets naturally experimented in this field. If praise of kings also continued, this too had long been an established tradition in Persian literature. In the Safavid era, Shiite poetry became closer to the general beliefs of the people and to the dominant culture, and this depended both on public reception and on the poet's heartfelt devotion. What made a subject popular did not lie outside the world of the artist; what mattered was the degree of innovation, taste, and artistry the poet could bring to it. In whatever field poets worked, they continued to extend Persian language and literature, and their strengths and weaknesses were secondary to that broader cultural achievement.

### 6. Imam Ali (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi's poetry is, in many ways, centered on his devotion to Imam Ali (as). In the first part of his poems, which consists of qasidas with religious content and expressions of Twelver Shiite beliefs, he praises and glorifies God and affirms divine unity; then he turns to the praise of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), after which he devotes several qasidas to Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 37):

Ali Mujahid prevails over Ghazanfar.  
 That the mountain has no limits, its stability is a rock...  
 The voice of La Fata illa Ali reached the ears of the Throne.  
 I am lost in the fear of the path, a world full of deceit.  
 The Shah, by your grace, has seen the "effect"  
 Throwing him into the abyss of his own actions, he misses him.  
 (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 37)

In this qasida, the poet's main emphasis is on the Imam's courage in battle and the fear he instills in the hearts of his enemies. It is, in effect, an epic ode centered on his martial qualities. In another qasida, however, the poet turns to Imam Ali's metaphysical place in existence and expresses his spiritual rank before God (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 39):

I have searched until the soil of Najaf, the tomb of Bu Torab.  
 The Throne says, "Anytime," or "Kent Troub's Litany."  
 The successor and cousin of Mustafa, the husband of Batul,  
 The Most High, the one with whom is the Mother of the Book.  
 The repository of God's knowledge revealed openly,  
 Sadiq al-qawl saluni from the correct answer.  
 The rightful heir of the throne, the owner of the *La Fata* banner,  
 My governor, count, is the lord of creation.  
 Whoever made him a prophet from you, I have chosen him.



The Prophet said, “Ali, the chapters are about him,”  
 Seeking the intensification of that good claw, the door of *Fath Bab*.  
 He who steps on the Prophet’s shoulders out of respect,  
 Whatever you know above him, what do you say is the truth?  
 Bai, the name of Allah is implicit in the Qur’an,  
 There was no other point in the book of Mustab.  
 (Ibid., p. 39)

Here, the poet attempts to gather in one place the status and virtues of that Imam, drawing upon Qur’anic verses, historical evidence, and transmitted narrations. To some extent, this is one of his most comprehensive poems in describing Imam Ali’s spiritual merits. In other qasidas, he often concentrates on one of these virtues in particular (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 42):

That is, Ali, the protector of God, the source of salvation,  
 On Mustafa, Caliph Mansur Kordgar.  
 Negative, other than that, art from the lofty heights,  
 The broken pair of swords to Zulfiqar.  
 The king who became broke on the shoulders of Rasul and Sanam,  
 The pride of honor reaches the throne and the carpet.  
 (Ibid., p. 42)

Along with Imam Ali (as), Ta’siri Tabrizi also composed three qasidas in praise of Hazrat Zahra (as), and these too testify to his devotion to this great lady of Islam (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994, pp. 44–45):

The pure soul of the women of Zahra, Sayyid,  
 Which, closed in its sanctuary, veils the souls of the saints.  
 A partner in the honor of the mission from a part of me,  
 Who found the glory and dignity of the curtain from its sign.  
 (Ibid., p. 44)

The infallibility of both worlds: Fatimah, daughter of the Messenger,  
 Who was the soul of the world, and who was the soul of the screen.  
 Wasn’t it his name that kept saying that?  
 All the good and bad plans of the world are on display.  
 (Ibid., p. 45)

At times, the poet also enters into theological discussions, explaining Shiite beliefs and defending the infallibility and status of the Imamate through poetic argument (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 99):

Ali was born as a Kaaba keeper;  
 It was clear that there is no such thing as God’s will.  
 There should be a light in the house;  
 It is not permissible to light a fire in a mosque.  
 The one who does not reject the beggar during prayer—



Why don't they pray for the sun?

(Ibid., p. 99)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, which he composed in imitation of Nezami's *Makhzan al-Asrar*, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) praises and glorifies Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 122):

Then Nabi Nube reached Haidar,  
He became aware of religion and emerged from two verses.  
The beginning of the Prophet has been explained;  
Haidar has changed from that verse.  
It was a turning point when prophethood ended;  
The era of prophethood has ended with the Imamate.  
Who is Ali, the sun of the iwan of truth?  
The prominent statement of the court of justice.  
The art gallery was his virgin couple;  
His principles and principles were...  
(Ibid., p. 122)

In the miscellaneous poems that appear at the end of his *Divan*, verses in praise of Imam Ali (as) can also be found (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 731):

For the height of his glory, he is like a stargazer;  
He grasps in his hand, like an astrolabe, a quarter of the inhabited earth...  
(Ibid., p. 731)

He also has delightful rubaiyat in which he focuses especially on Imam Ali (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 785):

Ali's sincerity was not betrayed by the heart of the traitor;  
There was no other way to God.  
Realize that there is no path to truth except through him;  
There was only one door in the Kaaba.  
There was no other guide like Cho Ali;  
I want to go nowhere but the soil of Najaf.  
Make up your mind to travel so that he may pray for you;  
The enemy says, "Do not return again."  
I want something from you, Ali Rawa;  
I want a place near your shrine.  
Until the shadow of your dome falls upon my head,  
I want a government with head and wings.  
(Ibid., p. 785)

### 7. Imam Hasan Mujtaba (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi speaks of Imam Hasan Mujtaba (as) after his noble mother and employs his poetic talent in lamenting and praising him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 48):



The high-ranking king of the place,  
 The golden nail was its symbol on the door of the sun.  
 That is, the intercessor of both houses is Shah Din Hassan,  
 Where was the army of astronomy, the sun's chakra?  
 The tribe of the Prophet, the dynasty of Haidar, which ruled,  
 Every morning, the sun rises from the sun.  
 The proof that proves his Imamate  
 Is in the presence of the stars and the sun.  
 Your "impact" was worthy of praise, because it was—  
 Who can hear the praise of a particle worthy of the sun?  
 (Ibid., p. 48)

In the masnavi section, he also has passages in *Jahan-Nama* devoted to Imam Hasan (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):

Close your eyes, because of the world of Morteza;  
 The proof of truth was Hasan Mujtaba.  
 The place of the Prophet and Haidar is his;  
 They are like children to his Prophet.  
 Hassan, who spoke of Ana Amlah?  
 He turned to Hassan, to Hassan's face.  
 Sayyid and sarkhil of the youth of Khald,  
 The body of a prophet, the soul of a saint, the soul of an immortal...  
 (Ibid., p. 124)

Among this poet's rubaiyat, one also refers to Imam Hasan (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 789):

The heart of another person wants the beauty of a good person;  
 He demands the right to be saved from hell.  
 May all my butterflies and moths burn;  
 It wants to be saddled, not burned.  
 (Ibid., p. 789)

In the *manqabats* of the Imams (as), Ta'siri also draws on various Hadiths and narrations, such as the report that Imam Hasan (as) and Imam Husayn (as), as children, rode upon the shoulders of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) (Majlisi, 1997, vol. 44, p. 231), or that they were referred to as the light of the Prophet's eyes (Mahdashi Haeri, 1374, vol. 16, p. 188). Numerous narrations emphasize the status and virtues of these Imams.

### 8. Imam Husayn (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri Tabrizi displays a special devotion to Imam Husayn (as) and to the epic event of Karbala. He composed more poems on Ashura than on any other subject, and the most poignant examples of Karbala poetry in his *Divan* should be sought from the perspective of deep poetic feeling. First, he wrote two qasidas in praise of the Imam, and then he turned to the



tragedy of Karbala more directly; in these poems, the influence of Mohtasham Kashani is quite evident (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 49):

The proof of truth, the king of the oppressed, Husayn, thirsty-lipped,  
The lip of the jewel is the expression of the world without light; it is miraculous.

The scholar of knowledge, the knower of the secrets of truth,  
The one who is the Imam and leader of all creation.  
Gabriel is the cradle of the Prophet, his companion is his shoulder;  
The grace of the angels is the light of Mustafa's eyes...  
(Ibid., p. 49)

Following Mohtasham, Ta'siri composed seventeen beautiful stanzas, which together form a significant collection of Karbala poetry (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 52):

O heart, be patient, for these are the days of mourning;  
O black-clad soul, it is the month of Muharram.  
Whose mourning is this that the era has resumed?  
The world is like the hair of mourners, tangled and disordered.  
This painful and burning sorrow that becomes new every year—  
If I recite it more, it will still be less than the Day of Judgment...  
There was nothing but grief at the feast of Karbala;  
There was no colorful blessing there except blood.  
Until the joy of resurrection reaches the heart of the wicked,  
A hundred caravans of salt come from the salt-pan of Karbala...  
When the cries of those rebels reached the tent,  
The lament of the people of the sanctuary reached earth and time.  
It was severed from the body, and the sky filled with blood;  
The sun emerged with its dagger drawn.  
(Ibid., p. 52)

At times, the poet responds to objections and criticisms by entering into theological discussion in defense of Imam Husayn (AS) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 99):

They say that Husayn ibn Ali al-Shafi'i will be the Judge—  
What kind of output did the Imams not make?  
Why did you abandon the religion of *taqiyyah*?  
He was a great pillar of the house of faith.  
(Ibid., p. 99)

In this way, Ta'siri responds to criticism by means of poetic reasoning and presents theological argument in artistic language. In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, he again speaks of Imam Husayn (as) (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):



Go to Khald as Hasan did,  
 To visit Husayn ibn Ali, the successor.  
 The blush on his face is a testimony to him;  
 The brightness of the eyes of courage is from him.  
 The fifth pillar of the Al-Aba,  
 His boast of chivalry is a boast...  
 (Ibid., p. 124)

In the rubaiyat, there is likewise a quatrain dedicated to this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 789):

O King of Martyrs, I ask for your forgiveness;  
 I desire the company of the martyrs' beloved.  
 The sweetness of sugar upon the lips of my eternal desire—  
 I want a piece of land from Karbala.  
 (Ibid., p. 789)

### 9. Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Out of devotion to Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as), Ta'siri composed a long qasida, referring to him as “our master and our guide” and discussing his life across several pages (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 66):

Sayyid al-Sajidin, the Imam of Truth,  
 Who is the essence of human nature?  
 Zayn al-'Abidin, the light of Husayn's eyes,  
 This son is worthy of such a father.  
 He has come as the witness of his Imamate;  
 The pupil of the Kaaba's eye is a stone.  
 O Imam, who is without a guardian?  
 Knowledge without benefit bears no fruit.  
 What else can “Ta'siri” utter except allusion?  
 For you know all about him...  
 (Ibid., p. 66)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he again addresses this Imam and sings in his honor (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 124):

Leader Sajjad, Imam of the age,  
 The adornment of the register of place and station.  
 The stone behind his truth  
 Testified to his Imamate.  
 The heavens are bent beneath his heavy sorrow;  
 The clouds are wet from his many tears.  
 Half a shepherd, like a sky of stars,  
 The daily provider of the poor.  
 Warm salutations—how you became a saint!  
 You made the earth level by your feet.



No one was more knowledgeable or pious than he;  
His effort was beyond all reckoning...

(Ibid., p. 124)

Among the important intertexts related to this Imam is the famous qasida by Farazdaq, the great Arab poet, who praised Imam Zayn al-Abidin (as) during the circumambulation of the Kaaba in the presence of Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik (Farazdaq, 1414 AH, vol. 1, p. 319):

This is the one whose footprint the valley knows,  
And the House knows him, and the sanctuary and the sacred precinct...  
(Farazdaq, 1414 AH, vol. 1, p. 319)

It is reported that the Imam sent him ten or twelve thousand dirhams in appreciation for this poem, but Farazdaq at first refused, saying that he had composed it only for the sake of God. The Imam replied that the Ahl al-Bayt (as) do not take back what they have given, and he made him swear to accept it (Arbali, 1381, vol. 2, p. 169).

#### 10. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri also composed a three-page qasida in praise of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as), emphasizing his scholarly status and spiritual perfection (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 68):

The Imam of preservation and manifestation, Muhammad Baqir,  
Whose praise is established at the threshold of the Throne.  
They strive like angels in circumambulation of the sanctuary;  
A voice from the unseen arrives: thanks for my effort.  
Because the burial of that subtle point is the treasure of gnosis,  
All light is hidden in the graves...  
(Ibid., p. 68)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, there is also a beautiful section devoted to this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 125):

The robe was drawn like a prayer rug to heaven;  
Imam Baqir attained the Imamate.  
Aware of every virtue and art,  
The proof of truth became the heir of the father.  
Eternal knowledge is his treasure-house;  
Eternal life is the table of his generosity.  
From the beginning of time, the knowledge of the past—  
Knower of secrets except the Truth.  
A station for those who wait to arrive,  
He has sent a message to the Messenger of God...  
(Ibid., p. 125)

From the perspective of poetic artistry, Ta'siri describes the Imam's station in language that reflects both reverence and literary effort:



He thought my arts would make me proud;  
 I heard our verse drowned from the Forgiving Lord.  
 A herald from the hidden place of glory  
 Cried out to me, "Be ashamed of pride, O eloquent one!"  
 One cannot be proud of this wealth of compounds  
 Before infinite and boundless knowledge and wisdom.  
 Where are you, and the desire for luxurious and proud garments,  
 Before this source of virtue and this emblem of intelligence?  
 Who made you at the threshold of the Lord of religion,  
 From the earring to the nail of the storehouse?  
 Envious of the light, its place is the dark day,  
 Instead of morning, his hope was shattered by another night.  
 Like red-written chapters and pages, like the trick of fate,  
 All his praises belong to the beauty of the maiden.  
 Houris and their companions turn toward the water;  
 May the water in your hand become pure wine.  
 A heart that has drunk the syrup of your love  
 Was drowned in nectar, like a seed in a grape.  
 If they grant me room in paradise, there is space there—  
 As it happened, I am guilty of your praise.  
 (Ibid., p. 68)

### 11. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as), regarded as the founder of the Ja'fari school in Shiite Islam, and under whose teaching thousands acquired religious knowledge, is warmly praised in Ta'siri's poetry (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 71):

Ja'fari, whose name is Ja'fari—what is his rank as a master?  
 There was a hyacinth flower, her hyacinth and basil.  
 The garden of the world of God—who is Ja'far Sadiq?  
 The intelligence of his schoolchild is enough.  
 The world revives through his very name;  
 On the second morning, his proof and argument were sufficient...  
 (Ibid., p. 71)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he further praises him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 125):  
 How did heaven become his place?  
 His son was the noble Imam Sadiq.  
 He found the Imamate as it had been assigned to Ja'far;  
 God's knowledge spread through him.  
 There is decisive proof for its diffusion,  
 Including Ḥadiths on principles and branches.  
 All knowledge is but a part of the teacher's breast;



before and after him ملك مالك، لشكر.

Solving Hanafi issues from their foundation—  
The bright light of hidden knowledge came from him.  
His food was granted through manifest divine giving,  
Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali...  
(Ibid., p. 125)

In his devotional expression, Ta'siri even compares Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) with the prophets of the Children of Israel:

He saw a sea of eloquence;  
The bowl of idols became his storm-ship.  
If Moses were to behold the miracle of his grace,  
The planks of his shop would become prosperous.  
If Khidr had realized the source of his knowledge,  
His fountain of life would be ashamed of its own moisture.  
Joseph of Egypt, who was his kindred spirit—  
The garden of Paradise became the corner of his prison.  
The vision of Yathrib, which found light from his shrine,  
The jest of Mojgan is the thorn of his Mughals.  
No one should be deprived of his due rank in speech,  
For the judge of his court is never slow in justice.  
Whoever is outside your love, his Muslim crown is  
But the wide dust of earth upon his faith.  
If the Prophet's praise and adoration were like this,  
I praise you knowing that you are from that station.  
(Ibid., p. 71)

## 12. Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

In his elegy for Imam Musa al-Kazim (as), Ta'siri composed verses full of sorrow and grief, which clearly show his heartfelt love for the Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 72):

Write a poem that is worthy of your understanding,  
The Arab Sultan, the foreign king, the pride of the nation.  
According to Hasan, that noble Musa Kazim,  
His loftiness attained the sky of dignity and greatness.  
He spent his entire life in bitterness and sorrow;  
The sea of shoes is enough to make me ashamed.  
(Ibid., p. 72)

In the masnavi *Jahan-Nama*, he also describes the passing of this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 126):

The burden of the noble Imam Sadiq was concluded;  
Musa Kazim assumed the Imamate.  
Moses and his Torah, his remembrance,



His vigilant guardianship of religion.  
 Like Joseph, the son of Rashid was sent to prison;  
 His life passed in prostration.  
 The tablet and pen of his school of wisdom,  
 The line of divine knowledge upon his forehead.  
 He recited the Qur'an to Baghdad;  
 The Prophet said, "Welcome to Yathrib."  
 Joseph and his Canaanite companion  
 Were in pain from the corner of his prison.  
 If the miracle of Moses is a dragon,  
 The veil of the hypocrite is a usurer.  
 (Ibid., p. 126)

### 13. Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

In his elegy for the eighth Imam (as), Ta'siri describes the shrine and court of Imam al-Reza (as), revealing his heartfelt devotion and spiritual connection to that sacred place (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 74):

Whoever sees the Kaaba in black knows it;  
 The source of knowledge is originally from the shrine of Shah Reza.  
 His Majesty, the color of the Imamate of Ali ibn Musa,  
 Who, on the Day of Resurrection, is the eye of intercession?  
 Could not leave the soil without seeking healing for the seeker;  
 It is not without reason that Saturn's eye is blind.  
 He gave poison in grapes to his malicious enemy;  
 The vine has wept since that event until the Day of Judgment.  
 (Ibid., p. 74)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he likewise sings of this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 127):

He went to the world of eternity like Moses,  
 Ali Reza, the proof of truth.  
 The son of the seventh Imam, the guarantor of the title,  
 The fire of lineage—this is perfection.  
 Fascinating in glance at life and death,  
 His exile became the homeland of the universe.  
 Mim's lips were closed because of the news;  
 Ain Ayoun became a bloody sight.  
 (Ibid., p. 127)

### 14. Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri also expresses heartfelt devotion to Imam Muhammad al-Taqi (as), and at the beginning of his qasidas he composes one in the Imam's honor (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 76):

Muhammad Taqi, leader of the pious,



Fate itself cannot rival a man of his field.  
 If the court of Solomon should speak to the ant,  
 After the trial it will appear before his court.  
 A thousand springs of knowledge flow in that valley,  
 And thirsty Khidr follows his lips in the desert.  
 (Ibid., p. 76)

He also sings of this Imam in *Jahan-Nama* (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 127):

Reza saw him because he was far from us,  
 Muhammad's son, the guide.  
 Ajud Afaq, Taqi Javad,  
 Nine heavens stand above the burden of the learned.  
 He was pious for the sake of divine pleasure,  
 Free from disease and abstinent.  
 After the father's bath and farewell,  
 A breath came from Mada'in to Tus.  
 The pole of time, the center of the ages of knowledge,  
 The enlightened one who awakens to understanding...  
 (Ibid., p. 127)

### 15. Imam Hadi al-Naqi (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

This Shiite poet also composed a beautiful qasida in honor of Imam Hadi al-Naqi (as), alluding to the virtues of the Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 78):

The chosen one among the sons of Ali, Naqi, guide of the community,  
 May that great servant protect his followers.  
 The king of the heavens, full of lofty ambition,  
 Grants a gift to the sky itself...  
 O lord, may the dust of your threshold smell of life!  
 May your peaceful fasting prove your faith...  
 (Ibid., p. 78)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he also elegizes this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

Paradise rose to the height of Taqi;  
 The proof of truth is Ali Naqi.  
 The leader of religion, the guide, the titled one,  
 Those who boast of their birth and lineage.  
 Gone forth from his boundless forgiveness,  
 Step by step in the path of his father and grandfather.  
 The creation of the world is like the sky and its moon,  
 Turning toward him from every side.  
 His undisguised generosity is immeasurable,



A hidden stone of sun-kissed emerald.  
 His throne, a dome full of light,  
 Envied by the celestial beings of his holy shrine.  
 (Ibid., p. 128)

### 16. Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Ta'siri calls Imam Hasan al-Askari (as) the rightful Imam and composes an emotional qasida in his honor, reflecting Shiite beliefs concerning him (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 80):

Hasan Askari, Imam by right,  
 May God be his humanity and soul.  
 A king who reigns from on high,  
 The father of the master of time.  
 Palace, throne, and kingdom of religion are such—  
 The Throne, the Chair, and the heavens are...  
 (Ibid., p. 80)

In the masnawi *Jahan-Nama*, he likewise addresses this Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

It was as though he had died in the path of God;  
 Then the father of Hadi al-Din became Hasan.  
 Hujjat Yazdan, Hasan Askari,  
 Leader of the caravan of guidance.  
 The face of good character is good from pre-eternity;  
 He concluded the covenant of Imamate with two حسن.  
 That is Hasan from Hasan Mujtaba;  
 This is حسن from the creation of the chosen Hasan.  
 The Throne above his teaching seat,  
 The Holy Spirit is his holy witness...  
 (Ibid., p. 128)

In another elegiac section, he writes (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 82):

Idols are not worthy of the Imamate;  
 Whose station is at the threshold?  
 In the lampstand of the sacred mosque,  
 Nor is the sky itself a lamp.  
 No one can match your greatness  
 Except God, who knows all secrets.  
 The dust of your threshold—  
 May it brighten the eye of the beholder.  
 Every particle of dust that rises from sanctity  
 Is the water of the face of Golestan.  
 The green fortune of your lovers  
 May remain eternal by the water's edge.



O kings, the influence is little indeed:  
 Be among the servants of the threshold.  
 Though he is disobedient and guilty,  
 Let him still be a lover of the family.  
 The Lord of your grace does not approve  
 That one cast his eyes toward others.  
 (Ibid., p. 82)

### 17. The Imam of the Age (as) in the Poetry of Ta'siri Tabrizi

Out of his special devotion to the Imam of the Age (as), Ta'siri composed a detailed *tarkib-band* and entitled it *Ramuz al-'Ashiqin*, displaying his poetic art across several pages (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 89):

It is time to benefit from the grace of God;  
 May the glad tidings reach the ears of the captives.  
 The Hashimite flood has departed from the valley of Batha;  
 Let the wind sweep away the thickets of religions.  
 Let the decisive proof emerge from the shore,  
 So that when morning comes, truth and falsehood may be distinguished.  
 Fear of the changing state of the times—  
 The sun rises from the west.  
 To those awaiting the glad tidings of his possible appearance,  
 It was far better than the glad tidings of Paradise.  
 (Ibid., p. 89)

In *Jahan-Nama*, he again describes the Promised One (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 128):

The army of lineage departed from this world,  
 The heir to the religion of the noble Prophet.  
 Mahdi, Hadi, king of pure lineage,  
 Awaited, standing, and possessor of the title.  
 Hujjat and Salih are among his other names;  
 Judgment upon the horizons comes from his Prophet.  
 The bearer of the message of the eleventh light,  
 A detailed and concise decree.  
 Turned to every miracle like Mustafa,  
 The heir to the legacy of all the prophets...  
 (Ibid., p. 128)

He also speaks of the occultation of that Imam (Ta'siri Tabrizi, 1994, p. 129):

Like mist and the sun behind the clouds,  
 His absence is a blessing more abundant than water.  
 O noble king of illustrious lineage!  
 A legacy both from the Prophet and from the Guardian.



We are all helpless and distressed,  
 Because you are a secret to whom we may turn.  
 Since your face went out of sight,  
 The lament “there is no effect” arose.  
 How long will you remain behind the veil while we remain veiled?  
 Show your face so that the sun may shine.  
 How long will this lofty sphere endure?  
 The neck of the whole world is under a noose.  
 Come and make our hearts rejoice;  
 Break the chains and free the world.  
 (Ibid., p. 129)

### 18. Conclusion

The *Divan* of Ta’siri Tabrizi is a comprehensive example of Shiite poetry in the Safavid era and reflects the beliefs and thoughts of its age like a mirror. The poet uses poetry as a means of expressing his spiritual attachments and, above all, his devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt (as). His qasidas are largely devoted to the praise of the Imams, especially the story of Karbala. In addition, he also addresses the two Safavid kings of his era, great men of his time, and even places of interest. In the various sections of his poetry, he consistently combines such themes with praise of the Fourteen Infallibles (as), and through his use of Qur’anic verses, narrations, and historical events, he is often able to narrate religious episodes effectively (Ta’siri Tabrizi, 1994).

In his 1,397 ghazals, he also presents beautiful depictions of love and mysticism under the influence of Hafez, Saeb, and other poets. In elegy, he followed Mohtasham Kashani and achieved success. It would be appropriate for his Karbala poems, which are numerous and significant, to be examined in a separate study so that his innovations in this field may be more fully appreciated. Although he has sometimes been described as a fanatical Shiite, it is more appropriate to regard him as a sincere Shiite poet and to emphasize his intellectual and mystical teachings. Theological, Sufi, romantic, and religious terms abound in his poetry. As he says, “I am worthy of your death, but I regret it,” which suggests that he passed through stages of spiritual journeying in his life—from hardship to government service and later to mystical discipline. He experimented with various forms of Persian poetry and was, to a considerable degree, successful. The essence of his poetry lies in Shiite beliefs and devotion to the Imams (as), which he expressed and explained well, leaving behind a rich collection of Shiite literature and poetry.



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