

# On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus

*Published in 1792, 'On the mystical poetry of the Persians and Hindus' is an essay describing Oriental mystical poetry for Western readers. It emphasises the contemporary relevance of the allegorical tradition within both Muslim and Hindu cultures as well as the compatibility of their mysticism and religion with each other and with Christianity.*

A figurative mode of expressing the fervour of devotion, or the ardent love of created spirits towards their beneficent Creator, has prevailed from time immemorial in *Asia*; particularly among the *Persian* theists, both ancient *Húshangis* and modern *Súfis*, who seem to have borrowed it from the *Indian* philosophers of the *Védánta* school; and their doctrines are also believed to be the source of that sublime, but poetical, theology, which glows and sparkles in the writings of the old *Academicks*. “Plato travelled into *Italy* and *Egypt*, says **Claude Fleury**, to learn the Theology of the Pagans at its fountain head:” its true fountain, however, was neither in *Italy* nor in *Egypt* (though considerable streams of it had been conducted thither by **Pythagoras** and by the family of **Misra**), but in *Persia* or *India*, which the founder of the *Italick* sect had visited with a similar design. What the *Grecian* travellers learned among the sages of the east, may perhaps be fully explained, at a season of leisure, in another dissertation; but we confine this essay to a singular species of poetry, which consists almost wholly of a mystical religious allegory, though it seems on a transient view to contain only the sentiments of a wild and voluptuous libertinism: now, admitting the danger of a poetical style, in which the limits between vice and enthusiasm are so minute as to be hardly distinguishable, we must beware of censuring it severely, and must allow it to be natural, though a warm imagination may carry it to a culpable excess; for an ardently grateful piety is congenial to the undepraved nature of man, whose mind, sinking under the magnitude of the subject, and struggling to express its emotions, has recourse to metaphors and allegories, which it sometimes extends beyond the bounds of cool reason, and often to the brink of absurdity. **Barrow**, who would have been the sublimest mathematician, if his religious turn of mind had not made him the deepest theologian of his age, describes Love as “an affection or inclination of the soul toward an object, proceeding from an apprehension and esteem of some excellence or convenience in it, as its *beauty*, worth, or utility, and producing, if it be absent, a proportionable desire, and consequently an endeavour, to obtain such a property in it, such possession of it, such an *approximation to it, or union with it*, as the thing is capable of; with a regret and displeasure in failing to obtain it, or in the want and loss of it; begetting likewise a complacence, satisfaction, and delight in its presence, possession, or enjoyment, which is moreover attended with a good will toward it, suitable to its nature; that is, with a desire, that it should arrive at, or continue in, its best state; with a delight to perceive it thrive and flourish; with a displeasure to see it suffer or decay: with a consequent endeavour to advance it in all good and preserve it from all evil.” Agreeably to this description, which consists of two parts, and was designed to comprize the tender love of the Creator towards created spirits, the great philosopher bursts forth in another place, with his usual animation and command of language, into the following panegyrick on the pious love of human souls toward the Author of their happiness: “Love is the sweetest and most delectable of all passions; and, when by the conduct of wisdom it is directed in a rational way toward a worthy, congruous, and attainable object, it cannot otherwise than fill the heart with ravishing delight: such, in all respects superlatively such, is **God**; who, infinitely beyond all other things, deserveth our affection, as most perfectly amiable and desirable; as having obliged us by innumerable and inestimable benefits; all the

good, that we have ever enjoyed, or can ever expect, being derived from his pure bounty; all things in the world, in competition with him being mean and ugly; all things, without him, vain, unprofitable, and hurtful to us. He is the most proper object of our love; for we chiefly were framed, and it is the prime law of our nature, to love him; *our soul, from its original instinct, vergeth toward him as its centre, and can have no rest, till it be fixed on him*: he alone can satisfy the vast capacity of our minds, and fill our boundless desires. He, of all lovely things, most certainly and easily may be attained; for, whereas commonly men are crossed in their affection, and their love is embittered from their affecting things imaginary, which they cannot reach, or coy things, which disdain and reject them, it is with **God** quite otherwise: He is most ready to impart himself; he most earnestly desireth and wooeth our love; he is not only most willing to correspond in affection, but even doth prevent us therein: *He doth cherish and encourage our love by sweetest influences and most consoling embraces*; by kindest expressions of favour, by most beneficial returns; and, whereas all other objects do in the enjoyment much fail our expectation, he doth ever far exceed it. Wherefore in all affectionate motions of our hearts toward **God**; in *desiring* him, or seeking his favour and friendship; in *embracing* him, or setting our esteem, our good will, our confidence on him; in *enjoying* him by devotional meditations and addresses to him; in a reflective sense of our interest and propriety in him; *in that mysterious union of spirit, whereby we do closely adhere to, and are, as it were, inserted in him*; in a hearty complacence in his benignity, a grateful sense of his kindness, and a zealous desire of yielding some requital for it, we cannot but feel very pleasant transports: indeed, that celestial flame, kindled in our hearts by the spirit of love, cannot be void of warmth; we cannot fix our eyes upon *infinite beauty*, we cannot taste infinite sweetness, we cannot cleave to infinite felicity, without also perpetually rejoicing in the first daughter of Love to **God**, Charity toward men; which, in complection and careful disposition, doth much resemble her mother; for she doth rid us from all those gloomy, keen, turbulent imaginations and passions, which cloud our mind, which fret our heart, which discompose the frame of our soul; from burning anger, from storming contention, from gnawing envy, from rankling spite, from racking suspicion, from distracting ambition and avarice; and consequently doth settle our mind in an even temper, in a sedate humour, in an harmonious order, in *that pleasant state of tranquillity, which naturally doth result from the voidance of irregular passions*.” Now this passage from **Barrow** (which borders, I admit, on quietism and enthusiastic devotion) differs only from the mystical theology of the *Súfís* and *Yógis*, as the flowers and fruits of *Europe* differ in scent and flavour from those of *Asia*, or as *European* differs from *Asiatick* eloquence: the same strain, in poetical measure, would rise up to the odes of **Spenser** on *Divine Love and Beauty*, and, in a higher key with richer embellishments, to the songs of **Hafiz** and **Jayade’va**, the raptures of the *Masnavi*, and the mysteries of the *Bhágavat*.

Before we come to the *Persians* and *Indians*, let me produce another specimen of *European* theology, collected from a late excellent work of the illustrious **M. Necker**.

“Were men animated, says he, with sublime thoughts, did they respect the intellectual power, with which they are adorned, and take an interest in the dignity of their nature, they would embrace with transport that sense of religion, which ennobles their faculties, keeps their minds in full strength, and unites them in idea with him, whose immensity overwhelms them with astonishment: *considering themselves as an emanation from that infinite Being*, the source and cause of all things, they would then disdain to be misled by a gloomy and false philosophy, and would cherish the idea of a **God**, who *created*, who *regenerates*, who *preserves* this

universe by invariable laws, and by a continued chain of similar causes producing similar effects; who pervades all nature with his divine spirit, as an universal soul, which moves, directs, and restrains the wonderful fabrick of this world. The blissful idea of a **God** sweetens every moment of our time, and embellishes before us the path of life; unites us delightfully to all the beauties of nature, and associates us with every thing that lives or moves. Yes; the whisper of the gales, the murmur of waters, the peaceful agitation of trees and shrubs, would concur to engage our minds and *affect our souls with tenderness*, if our thoughts were elevated to *one universal cause*, if we recognized on all sides the work of *Him, whom we love*; if we marked the traces of his august steps and benignant intentions, if we believed ourselves actually present at the display of his boundless power and the magnificent exertions of his unlimited goodness. Benevolence, among all the virtues, has a character more than human, and a certain amiable simplicity in its nature, which seems analogous to the *first idea*, the original intention of conferring delight, which we necessarily suppose in the Creator, when we presume to seek his motive in bestowing existence: benevolence is that virtue, or, to speak more emphatically, that *primordial beauty*, which preceded all times and all worlds; and, when we reflect on it, there appears an analogy, obscure indeed at present, and to us imperfectly known, between our moral nature and a time yet very remote, when we shall satisfy our ardent wishes and lively hopes, which constitute perhaps a sixth, and (if the phrase may be used) a distant, sense. It may even be imagined, that love, the brightest ornament of our nature, love, enchanting and sublime, is a mysterious pledge for the assurance of those hopes; since love, by disengaging us from ourselves, by transporting us beyond the limits of our own being, is the first step in our progress to a joyful immortality; and, by affording both the notion and example of a cherished object distinct from our own souls, may be considered as an interpreter to our hearts of something, which our intellects cannot conceive. We may seem even to hear the Supreme Intelligence and Eternal Soul of all nature, give this commission to the spirits, which emanated from him: *Go; admire a small portion of my works, and study them; make your first trial of happiness, and learn to love him, who bestowed it; but seek not to remove the veil spread over the secret of your existence: your nature is composed of those divine particles, which, at an infinite distance, constitute my own essence; but you would be too near me, were you permitted to penetrate the mystery of our separation and union: wait the moment ordained by my wisdom; and, until that moment come, hope to approach me only by adoration and gratitude.*”

If these two passages were translated into *Sanscrit* and *Persian*, I am confident, that the *Védántis* and *Súfis* would consider them as an epitome of their common system; for they concur in believing, that the souls of men differ infinitely in *degree*, but not at all in *kind*, from the divine spirit, of which they are *particles*, and in which they will ultimately be absorbed; that the spirit of **God** pervades the universe, always immediately present to his work, and consequently always in substance, that he alone is perfect benevolence, perfect truth, perfect beauty; that the love of him alone is *real* and genuine love, while that of all other objects is *absurd* and illusory, that the beauties of nature are faint resemblances, like images in a mirror, of the divine charms; that, from eternity without beginning to eternity without end, the supreme benevolence is occupied in bestowing happiness or the means of attaining it; that men can only attain it by performing their part of the *primal covenant* between them

and the Creator; that nothing has a pure absolute existence but *mind* or *spirit*; that *material substances*, as the ignorant call them, are no more than gay *pictures* presented continually to our *minds* by the sempiternal Artist; that we must beware of attachment to such *phantoms*, and attach ourselves exclusively to God, who truly exists in us, as we exist solely in him; that we retain even in this forlorn state of separation from our beloved, the *idea* of *heavenly beauty*, and the *remembrance* of our *primeval vows*; that sweet musick, gentle breezes, fragrant flowers, perpetually renew the primary *idea*, refresh our fading memory, and melt us with tender affections; that we must cherish those affections, and by abstracting our souls from *vanity*, that is, from all but **God**, approximate to his essence, in our final union with which will consist our supreme beatitude. From these principles flow a thousand metaphors and poetical figures, which abound in the sacred poems of the *Persians* and *Hindus*, who seem to mean the same thing in substance, and differ only in expression, as their languages differ in idiom! The modern *Su'fis*, who profess a belief in the *Koran*, suppose with great sublimity both of thought and of diction, an *express contract*, on *the day of eternity without beginning*, between the assemblage of created spirits and the supreme soul, from which they were detached, when a celestial voice pronounced these words, addressed to each spirit separately, "Art thou not with thy Lord?" that is, art thou not bound by a solemn contract with him? and all the spirits answered with one voice, "Yes:" hence it is, that *alist*, or *art thou not*, and *beli*, or *yes*, incessantly occur in the mystical verses of the *Persians*, and of the *Turkish* poets, who imitate them, as the *Romans* imitated the *Greeks*. The *Hindus* describe the same covenant under the figurative notion, so finely expressed by *Isaiah*, of a *nuptial contract*; for considering **God** in the three characters of Creator, Regenerator and Preserver, and supposing the power of *Preservation* and *Benevolence* to have become incarnate in the person of *Crishna*, they represent him as married to *Ra'dha'*, a word signifying *atonement*, *pacification*, or *satisfaction*, but applied allegorically to *the soul of man*, or rather to *the whole assemblage of created souls*, between whom and the benevolent Creator they suppose that *reciprocal love*, which *Barrow* describes with a glow of expression perfectly oriental, and which our most orthodox theologians believe to have been mystically *shadowed* in the song of *Solomon*, while they admit, that, in a *literal* sense, it is an epithalamium on the marriage of the sapient king with the princess of *Egypt*. The very learned author of the prelections on sacred poetry declared his opinion, that the canticles were founded on historical truth, but involved an allegory of that sort, which he named *mystical*; and the beautiful poem on the loves of *Laili* and *Majnun* by the inimitable *Niza'mi* (to say nothing of other poems on the same subject) is indisputably built on true history, yet avowedly allegorical and mysterious; for the introduction to it is a continued rapture on *divine love*; and the name of *Laili* seems to be used in the *Masnavi* and the odes of *Hafiz* for the omnipresent spirit of **God**.

It has been made a question, whether the poems of *Hafiz* must be taken in a literal or in a figurative sense; but the question does not admit of a general and direct answer; for even the most enthusiastick of his commentators, allow, that some of them are to be taken literally, and his editors ought to have distinguished them, as our *Spenser* has distinguished his four Odes on *Love* and *Beauty*, instead of mixing the profane with the divine, by a childish arrangement according to the alphabetical order of the rhymes. *Hafiz* never pretended to more than human virtues, and it is known that he had human propensities; for in his youth he was passionately in love with a girl surnamed *Shákhi Nebàt*, or *the Branch of Sugarcane*, and the prince of *Shiraz* was his rival: since there is an agreeable wildness in the story, and since the poet himself alludes to it in one of his odes, I give it you at length from the commentary. There is a place called *Pirisebz*, or *the Green old man*, about four *Persian* leagues from the city; and a popular opinion had long prevailed, that a youth, who should pass forty successive nights in *Pirisebz* without sleep, would infallibly become an excellent poet: young *Hafiz* had accordingly made a vow, that he would serve that apprenticeship with the utmost exactness, and for thirty-nine days he rigorously discharged his duty, walking every morning before the house of his coy

mistress, taking some refreshment and rest at noon, and passing the night awake at his poetical station; but, on the fortieth morning, he was transported with joy on seeing the girl beckon to him through the lattices, and invite him to enter: she received him with rapture, declared her preference of a bright genius to the son of a king, and would have detained him all night, if he had not recollected his vow, and, resolving to keep it inviolate, returned to his post. The people of *Shiraz* add (and the fiction is grounded on a couplet of *Hafiz*), that, early next morning *an old man, in a green mantle*, who was no less a personage than *Khizr* himself, approached him at *Pirisebz* with a cup brimful of nectar, which the *Greeks* would have called the water of *Aganippe*, and rewarded his perseverance with an inspiring draught of it. After his juvenile passions had subsided, we may suppose that his mind took that religious bent, which appears in most of his compositions; for there can be no doubt that the following distichs, collected from different odes, relate to the mystical theology of the *Sufis*.

“In eternity without beginning, a ray of thy beauty began to gleam; when Love sprang into being, and cast flames over all nature;

“On that day thy cheek sparkled even under thy veil, and all this beautiful imagery appeared on the mirror of our fancies.

“Rise, my soul; that I may pour thee forth on the pencil of that supreme Artist, who comprized in a turn of his compass all this wonderful scenery!

“From the moment, when I heard the divine sentence, *I have breathed into man a portion of my spirit*, I was assured, that we were His, and He ours.

“Where are the glad tidings of union with thee, that I may abandon all desire of life? I am a bird of holiness, and would fain escape from the net of this world.

“Shed, O Lord, from the cloud of heavenly guidance one cheering shower, before the moment, when I must rise up like a particle of dry dust!

“The sum of our transactions in this universe, is nothing: bring us the wine of devotion; for the possessions of this world vanish.

“The true object of heart and soul is the glory of union with our beloved: that object really exists, but without it both heart and soul would have no existence.

“O the bliss of that day, when I shall depart from this desolate mansion; shall seek rest for my soul; and shall follow the traces of my beloved:

“Dancing, with love of his beauty, like a mote in a sun-beam, till I reach the spring and fountain of light, whence yon sun derives all his lustre!”

The couplets, which follow, relate as indubitably to human love and sensual gratifications:

“May the hand never shake, which gathered the grapes! May the foot never slip, which pressed them!

“That poignant liquor, which the zealot calls *the mother of sins*, is pleasanter and sweeter to me than the kisses of a maiden.

“Wine two years old and a damsel of fourteen are sufficient society for me, above all companies great or small.

“How delightful is dancing to lively notes and the cheerful melody of the flute, especially when we touch the hand of a beautiful girl!

“*Call for wine, and scatter flowers around: what more canst thou ask from fate?* Thus spoke the nightingale this morning: what sayest thou, sweet rose, to his precepts?

“Bring thy couch to the garden of roses, that thou mayest kiss the cheeks and lips of lovely damsels, quaff rich wine, and smell odoriferous blossoms.

“O branch of an exquisite rose-plant, for whose sake dost thou grow? Ah! on whom will that smiling rose-bud confer delight?

“The rose would have discoursed on the beauties of my charmer, but the gale was jealous, and stole her breath, before she spoke.

“In this age, the only friends, who are free from blemish, are a flask of pure wine and a volume of elegant love songs.

“O the joy of that moment, when the self-sufficiency of inebriation rendered me independent of the prince and of his minister!”

Many zealous admirers of Ha´fiz insist, that by *wine* he invariably means *devotion*; and they have gone so far as to compose a dictionary of words in the *language*, as they call it, of the *Súfis*: in that vocabulary *sleep* is explained by *meditation* on the divine perfections, and *perfume* by *hope* of the divine favour; *gales* are *illapses* of grace; *kisses* and *embraces*, the *raptures* of piety; *idolaters*, *infidels*, and *libertines* are men of the purest *religion*, and their *idol* is the Creator himself; the *tavern* is a retired oratory, and its *keeper*, a sage instructor; *beauty* denotes the *perfection* of the Supreme Being; *tresses* are the *expansion* of his glory; *lips*, the hidden mysteries of his essence; *down* on the cheek, the world of spirits, who encircle his throne; and a *black mole*, the *point* of indivisible unity; lastly, *wantonness*, *mirth*, and *ebriety*, mean religious ardour and abstraction from all terrestrial thoughts. The poet himself gives a colour in many passages to such an interpretation; and without it, we can hardly conceive, that his poems, or those of his numerous imitators, would be tolerated in a *Muselman* country, especially at *Constantinople*, where they are venerated as divine compositions: it must be admitted, that the sublimity of the *mystical allegory*, which, like metaphors and comparisons, should be *general* only, not minutely exact, is diminished, if not destroyed, by an attempt at *particular* and

*distinct resemblances*; and that the style itself is open to dangerous misinterpretation, while it supplies real infidels with a pretext for laughing at religion itself.

On this occasion I cannot refrain from producing a most extraordinary ode by a *Súfi* of *Bokhárà*, who assumed the poetical surname of *Ismat*: a more modern poet, by prefixing three lines to each couplet, which rhyme with the first hemistich, has very elegantly and ingeniously converted the *Kasidah* into a *Mokhammes*, but I present you only with a literal version of the original distichs:

“Yesterday, half inebriated, I passed by the quarter, where the vintners dwell, to seek the daughter of an infidel who sells wine.

“At the end of the street, there advanced before me a damsel with a fairy's cheeks, who, in the manner of a pagan, wore her tresses deshevelled over her shoulder like the sacerdotal thread. I said: *O thou, to the arch of whose eye-brow the new moon is a slave, what quarter is this and where is thy mansion?*

“She answered: *Cast thy rosary on the ground; bind on thy shoulder the thread of paganism; throw stones at the glass of piety; and quaff wine from a full goblet;*

“*After that come before me, that I may whisper a word in thine ear: thou wilt accomplish thy journey, if thou listen to my discourse.*

“Abandoning my heart and rapt in ecstasy, I ran after her, till I came to a place, in which religion and reason forsook me.

“At a distance I beheld a company, all insane and inebriated, who came boiling and roaring with ardour from the wine of love;

“Without cymbals, or lutes, or viols, yet all full of mirth and melody; without wine, or goblet, or flask, yet all incessantly drinking.

“When the cord of restraint slipped from my hand, I desired to ask her one question, but she said: *Silence!*

“*This is no square temple, to the gate of which thou canst arrive precipitately: this is no mosque to which thou canst come with tumult, but without knowledge. This is the banquet-house of infidels, and within it all are intoxicated; all, from the dawn of eternity to the day of resurrection, lost in astonishment.*

“*Depart then from the cloister, and take the way to the tavern; cast off the cloak of a dervise, and wear the robe of a libertine.*

“I obeyed; and, if thou desirest the same strain and colour with *Ismat*, imitate him, and sell this world and the next for one drop of pure wine.”

Such is the strange religion, and stranger language of the Suʿfis; but most of the Asiatick poets are of that religion, and, if we think it worth while to read their poems, we must think it worth while to understand them: their great Maulavi assures us, that “they profess eager desire, but with no carnal affection, and circulate the cup, but no material goblet; since all things are spiritual in their sect, all is mystery within mystery;” consistently with which declaration he opens his astonishing work, entitled the Masnavi, with the following couplets:

Hear, how yon reed in sadly-pleasing tales  
Departed bliss and present wo bewails!  
‘With me, from native banks untimely torn,  
‘Love-warbling youths and soft-ey’d virgins mourn.  
‘O! Let the heart, by fatal absence rent,  
‘Feel what I sing, and bleed when I lament:  
‘Who roams in exile from his parent bow’r,  
‘Pants to return, and chides each ling’ring hour.  
‘My notes, in circles of the grave and gay,  
‘Have hail’d the rising, cheer’d the closing day:  
‘Each in my fond affections claim’d a part,  
‘But none discern’d the secret of my heart.  
‘What though my strains and sorrows slow combin’d!  
‘Yet ears are slow, and carnal eyes are blind.

‘Free through each mortal form the spirits roll,  
‘But sight avails not. Can we see the soul?’  
Such notes breath’d gently from yon vocal frame:  
Breath’d said I? no; ’twas all enliv’ning flame.  
’Tis love, that fills the reed with warmth divine;  
’Tis love, that sparkles in the racy wine.  
Me, plaintive wand’rer from my peerless maid,  
The reed has fir’d, and all my soul betray’d.  
He gives the bane, and he with balsam cures;  
Afflicts, yet soothes; impassions, yet allures.  
Delightful pangs his am’rous tales prolong;  
And Laili’s frantick lover lives in song.  
Not he, who reasons best, this wisdom knows:  
Ears only drink what rapt’rous tongues disclose.  
Nor fruitless deem the reed’s heart-piercing pain:  
See sweetness dropping from the parted cane.  
Alternate hope and fear my days divide:  
I courted Grief, and Anguish was my bride.  
Flow on, sad stream of life! I smile secure:  
Thou livest; Thou, the purest of the pure!

Rise, vig'rous youth! be free; be nobly bold:  
Shall chains confine you, though they blaze with gold?  
Go; to your vase the gather'd main convey:  
What were your stores? The pittance of a day!  
New plans for wealth your fancies would invent;  
Yet shells, to nourish pearls, must lie content.  
The man, whose robe love's purple arrows rend  
Bids av'rice rest and toils tumultuous end.  
Hail, heav'nly love! true source of endless gains!  
Thy balm restores me, and thy skill sustains.

Oh, more than Galen learn'd, than Plato wise!  
My guide, my law, my joy supreme arise!  
Love warms this frigid clay with mystick fire,  
And dancing mountains leap with young desire.  
Blest is the foul, that swims in seas of love,  
And long the life sustain'd by food above.  
With forms imperfect can perfection dwell?  
Here pause, my song; and thou, vain world, farewell.

A volume might be filled with similar passages from the *Súfî* poets; from Sa'ib, Orfî, Mi'r Khosrau, Ja'mi, Hazi'n, and Sa'bik, who are next in beauty of composition to Ha'fiz and Sadi, but next at a considerable distance; from Mesîhi, the most elegant of their *Turkish* imitators; from a few *Hindi* poets of our own times, and from Ibnul Fa'rad, who wrote mystical odes in *Arabick*; but we may close this account of the *Súfis* with a passage from the third book of the *Bustan*, the declared subject of which is *divine love*; referring you for a particular detail of their metaphysicks and theology to the *Dabistan* of Mohsani Fani, and to the pleasing essay, called the *Junction of two Seas*, by that amiable and unfortunate prince, Da'ra' Shocu'h:

“The love of a being composed, like thyself, of water and clay, destroys thy patience and peace of mind; it excites thee, in thy waking hours with minute beauties, and engages thee, in thy sleep, with vain imaginations: with such real affection dost thou lay thy head on her foot, that the universe, in comparison of her, vanishes into nothing before thee; and, since thy gold allures not her eye, gold and mere earth appear equal in thine. Not a breath dost thou utter to any one else, for with her thou hast no room for any other; thou declarest that her abode is in thine eye, or, when thou closest it, in thy heart; thou hast no fear of censure from any man; thou hast no power to be at rest for a moment; if she demands thy soul, it runs instantly to thy lip; and if she waves a cimeter over thee, thy head falls immediately under it. Since an absurd love, with its basis on air, affects thee so violently, and commands with a sway so despotic, canst thou wonder, that they, who walk in the true path, are drowned in the sea of mysterious adoration? They disregard life through affection for its giver; they abandon the world through remembrance of its maker; they are inebriated with the melody of amorous complaints; they remember their beloved, and resign to him both this life and the next. Through remembrance of God, they shun all mankind: they are so enamoured of the cup-bearer, that they spill

the wine from the cup. No panacea can heal them, for no mortal can be apprized of their malady; so loudly has rung in their ears, from eternity without beginning, the divine word *alest*, with *beli*, the tumultuous exclamation of all spirits. They are a sect fully employed, but sitting in retirement; their feet are of earth, but their breath is a flame: with a single yell they could rend a mountain from its base; with a single cry they could throw a city into confusion: like wind, they are concealed and move nimbly; like stone, they are silent, yet repeat God's praises. At early dawn their tears flow so copiously as to wash from their eyes the black powder of sleep: though the courser of their fancy ran so swiftly all night, yet the morning finds them left behind in disorder: night and day are they plunged in an ocean of ardent desire, till they are unable, through astonishment, to distinguish night from day. So enraptured are they with the beauty of Him, who decorated the human form, that with the beauty of the form itself, they have no concern; and, if ever they behold a beautiful shape, they see in it the mystery of God's work.

“The wise take not the husk in exchange for the kernel; and he, who makes that choice, has no understanding. He only has drunk the pure wine of unity, who has forgotten, by remembering God, all things else in both worlds.”

Let us return to the *Hindus*, among whom we now find the same emblematical theology, which *Pythagoras* admired and adopted. The loves of *Crishna* and *Radha*, or the reciprocal attraction between the divine goodness and the human soul, are told at large in the tenth book of the *Bhágavat*, and are the subject of a little *Pastoral Drama*, entitled *Gítagóvinda*: it was the work of *Jayade'va*, who flourished, it is said, before *Calidas*, and was born, as he tells us himself, in *Cenduli*, which many believe to be in *Calinga*; but, since there is a town of a similar name in *Berdwan*, the natives of it insist that the finest lyric poet of *India* was their countryman, and celebrate in honour of him an annual jubilee, passing a whole night in representing his drama, and in singing his beautiful songs. After having translated the *Gítagóvinda* word for word, I reduced my translation to the form, in which it is now exhibited; omitting only those passages, which are too luxuriant and too bold for an *European* taste, and the prefatory ode on the ten incarnations of *Vishnu*, with which you have been presented on another occasion: the phrases in *Italicks*, are the *burdens* of the several songs; and you may be assured, that not a single image or idea has been added by the translator.