

2011

## The Communicative Roles of Saba the Wind in Hafez's Poetry

Ali Asghar Kia  
*Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran*

Saeed Saghe'i  
*Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/meme>

---

### Recommended Citation

Kia, Ali Asghar and Saghe'i, Saeed, The Communicative Roles of Saba the Wind in Hafez's Poetry, *Middle East Media Educator*, 1(1), 2011, 92-100.  
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/meme/vol1/iss1/16>

---

## The Communicative Roles of Saba the Wind in Hafez's Poetry

### Abstract

Many natural elements are present in Hafez' poetry, one of which is Saba Wind. From the viewpoint of communication sciences, Saba Wind demonstrates the components and concepts of a communication process. Saba Wind has many communicative roles in Hafez' poetry: an informed source; a sender giving information; it conveys the message; as a channel, it transmits concepts and messages; it is sometimes a harbinger; it receives messages; it shapes meaning in the mind of the receiver. Performing case studies of Hafez' poems and comparing and contrasting these cases resulted in a tree diagram which shows that Saba Wind plays six major roles consisting of eight subcategories. Analyzing the communicative roles of Saba Wind, this paper is intended to investigate the quality and degree of its roles.

## The Communicative Roles of Saba the Wind in Hafez's Poetry

By Ali Asghar Kia and Saeed Saghe'i | [aliasgharkia@yahoo.com](mailto:aliasgharkia@yahoo.com), [saeedsaghei@yahoo.com](mailto:saeedsaghei@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*Many natural elements are present in Hafez' poetry, one of which is Saba Wind. From the viewpoint of communication sciences, Saba Wind demonstrates the components and concepts of a communication process. Saba Wind has many communicative roles in Hafez' poetry: an informed source; a sender giving information; it conveys the message; as a channel, it transmits concepts and messages; it is sometimes a harbinger; it receives messages; it shapes meaning in the mind of the receiver. Performing case studies of Hafez' poems and comparing and contrasting these cases resulted in a tree diagram which shows that Saba Wind plays six major roles consisting of eight subcategories. Analyzing the communicative roles of Saba Wind, this paper is intended to investigate the quality and degree of its roles.*

### Introduction

Over centuries poets have stated numerous concepts in verse form which have been transmitted and grasped in different ways generation after generation. Today, however, more than any other time, the need to decode and make use of these concepts with communicative aims is gaining importance. The reason is that poetry is very much concerned with both form and content and acts as the main pillar in the edifice of literature. Every individual is likely to use poetry in order to make messages more pleasant, and this is not limited to a particular group or class. Poets, physicians, people in the street, and whoever else, tend to use the poetic side of language when they are unable to express what they intend to say. Imaginative descriptions in poetry are, in fact, used to transfer the meanings in ways that satisfy various tastes.

However, the role of poetry in the vast and long history of Iranian language and culture is fundamentally different than in other cultures and languages such as English. The Iranian emphasis on the necessity of both musical and conceptual beauties of poetry is almost unique and matchless all over the world. Although translating poetry deprives it of a great part of its delicacies and nuances and leaves almost only the conceptual beauty, Persian poetry enjoys a remarkable reputation in the world.

Molavi (globally known as Rumi), Omar Khayyam, Sa'di, Ferdowsi, and Hafez are now widely appreciated. The influence of Hafez on Goethe and his *West-östliches Divan* should not be neglected. A famous poem by Sa'di ("Human beings are members of a whole..."), which focuses on the elevated concept of philanthropy and altruism is used to grace the entrance to the Hall of Nations of the UN building in New York. The many translations of Molavi into different languages and the publishing of numerous books on his poems are indicative of his popularity in the world and especially in the US. The reason for the reputation of Iranian poets lies in their presenting profound humanitarian and mystical concepts through literary devices. Everyone should know before becoming acquainted with Persian poetry that it is mostly concerned with imagination; poems which are empty of imagination, though embellished with rhythm, rhyme, and literary devices, are considered versification but not poetry.

In the past, the only available medium for poets to communicate was writing, and poetry was used to teach the skills of life as well as to convey emotions, experiences, and perceptions of life; in modern times the various types of media do not guarantee the richness of the concepts they transmit, maybe due to the form of the media dominating over poetic content, so much so that poetry seems to be decreasing in importance.

One could name many reasons for the global decrease in the importance and popularity of poetry: emergence of more appealing auditory and visual media and the audience accustomed to ease of comprehension in communication processes, for instance. These concepts are dealt with in detail by theorists like Jürgen Habermas, Marshall McLuhan, and others and, along with bourgeois overindulgence, have led to poetry being less influential and popular. To fit the scope of this paper, however, we discuss the reasons behind the decline of poetry in Iran and why this country introduces fewer and fewer important poets. In the ancient world, Iranian culture and civilization were in contact with other major civilizations like Greece and Rome. In the Middle Ages it overshadowed all other cultures and nations when figures such as Molavi, Hafez, Sa'di, Khayyam and many others grew out of Iran and added a new chapter to world poetry.

But today, the ruling conditions of the society have changed, and poetry has become somehow restrained. A universal poetry entails that the culture of the poet be universal, that is, he must have a universal understanding of the world. This does not mean that the people of the poet's country necessarily have to possess a universal understanding; rather the poet himself, regardless of where he lives, should come to gain a universal way of thinking. In Iran, it is becoming more difficult for the elite to gain such understanding. Reading only translations will not bring universal understanding because it should be remembered that translations convey only thoughts and not understanding. What is important is that these great thoughts become internalized in us. The Iranian poet, or more generally intellectual, does not realize that being either traditional, modernist, or postmodernist changes the individual's character. It is not possible to think modernly and, at the same time, live a traditional life. This lack of people with a universal understanding accounts to a great extent for the sterile field of poetry in Iran.

To ameliorate the situation, we need to investigate and analyze the content of the communication processes inherent in poems. Scholars of communication have so far shown little interest in researching Persian literary texts of the past, their mystical, spiritual, aesthetic, cultural, and political messages, and how these messages are communicated to the public. Research into Persian literature so far has been conducted mostly from purely literary perspectives. Few interdisciplinary studies of mediated communication of poetic texts have been attempted.

A communication process involves a sender (source), a message (encoding), a channel (decoding), and a receiver (target). The communication models often referred to in this field of study are those of Shannon and Weaver (1949), Wilbur Schramm (1954), David Berlo (1960), and Dance Barnlund (1970). Poets, according to their intentions, shape their message in the form of a poem. In other words, the sender or poet creates the message, considers its effect on the audience, and then encodes the message to transfer it to the audience through the channel of the book or magazine.

On the other side, the audience uses the book or magazine and decodes the poems to try to understand the poet's intention and then to close the communication loop. This process is a loop because the receivers, in turn, connect to the beginner of the loop, that is, the poet, through feedback and send back - the difference between the two being that the former is thought out and calculated while the latter is spontaneous and unconscious.

Poems require two types of decoding: first, reading or listening to the poems in the form of rhymed or rhythmic words; second, decoding certain concepts that the poet has concealed beneath the deep layers of the poem and that may be interpreted differently by different individuals. Poems - unlike other media texts which use standard language - do not totally conform to, and sometimes are opposed to, what the receiver understands, due to artistic use of literary language and devices.

To examine the communicative roles of Saba Wind, we should first decode this concept. Then we can see what communicative concepts exist and how they are presented in Hafez's poems, and whether we can allocate a communicative role to Saba Wind. If yes, what parts of the communication process do these roles include? Finally, is there any link between the communicative concepts stated centuries ago by Hafez and those of modern theories of communication studies?

This paper aims to compare the components of a communication process with the communicative act of poets. It will then propose a communication model – based on a textual analysis of Hafez's poem "Saba Wind" - specific to poetry. This will show that the communication theories and principles that students are being taught today are unquestioningly accepted to have originated from Western traditions when they were in fact already integral in the discourse of public intellectuals and mystics in the Persian and Islamic world. This highlights the necessity to conduct research into literary works of the past to shed light on the communicative roles of poems during the time of Hafez.

### 1. Hafez and His Poetry

Hafez, one of the greatest poets of the world, was born in the eighth century A.H. (14th century A.D.). Most of his poems are in the form of a ghazal (resembling the sonnet) and mostly dealing with love. His Divan or collected works - including nearly 500 ghazals, some qasidas, two masnavis, several qit'as, and a couple of rubaa'ys - has so far been printed in 400 different forms in Persian and other languages.

His profound knowledge of Persian and Arabic language and literature as well as of Islam made him a real Sufi who was the enemy of false Sufis. Hafez went beyond prejudice and freed himself from every sort of restraint to struggle against those who harnessed religion and power to oppress people. This made him a liberating figure whose Divan was for the most part dedicated to fighting against hypocrisy. To show the universal aspect of Hafez's character, it will suffice to mention that Goethe composed his West-Östliches Divan under his influence and dedicated its second chapter, entitled "Book of Hafez," to poems in praise of Hafez. Nietzsche, the great German philosopher, also composed a poem entitled "To Hafez."

Hafez differs from other Iranian poets in that he mostly speaks of divine and mystical love in his poems. In his mystical poems, unreal (i.e., physical) love appears as a curtain behind which divine love is concealed. Many natural elements are present in Hafez's poems among which Saba Wind is probably the most conspicuous. Saba plays crucial roles in the communication between the lover and the beloved, which is a recurring theme in his verse, and these roles will be dealt with in the present paper.

### 2. Decoding Saba Wind

Saba is a breeze that blows at sunrise from the east. It is a breeze to which lovers confide their secrets and which, according to Abdul-Razzagh Kashani, is "the Clement Waft" ("Nafahaat-e Rahmaaniyeh") that blows from the Spiritual East. Saba takes on many roles in Hafez's poems and is a harbinger that carries good news between lover and beloved. Saba Wind blows slowly and brings the scent of the beloved to Hafez so that he will not stay alone. In fact, Hafez wants it to convey his obedience to his beloved. Like most poets, Hafez shows naturalistic tendencies and makes use of natural elements. Sometimes he personifies objects and even attributes high and noble traits to them.

For the element wind, he uses 21 attributes in his poems: from wind of spring, autumn, to wind of distress, arrogance, loftiness. He names Saba Wind more than others and ascribes to it many

characteristics. A search of Hafez's poems (Table 1) shows that the word "Saba" is mentioned 97 times and "Saba Wind" 23 times, which is indicative of the crucial importance of wind in the poetry.

Phrase	Frequency	Percent
Saba Wind	23	54.76
Saba Breeze	2	4.76
Harbinger of Saba	3	7.14
O! Saba	12	28.57
O! Harbinger of Saba	1	2.38
O! Saba Wind	1	2.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Frequency of different forms of Saba in the sample

### 3. Saba as Informer

One of the six important roles of Saba in the communication process is to inform. Saba Wind, as the first element of the process, the sender, plays the role of an informer. This informing divides into one-way informing, and two-way informing, as a courier.

#### 3.1. One Way Informer

Saba Wind brings messages and, interestingly, they are all good and pleasant. In five of Hafez's ghazals, this role is obvious where Saba brings good messages for the poet, who plays the role of the lover, and, as a result, is delighted with those pleasant messages and compares Saba to Solomon's hoopoe, a bird known for its striking crown of colorful feathers. In this role, Saba functions only one way, giving a message to the poet, and at this point its task is completed.

*After this, My hand and my skirt; the cypress and the marge of the stream,  
Especially, now, that, glad tidings of February, the wind gave.* (Hafez, Ghazal 112)

*With glad tidings, the breeze is the lapwing of Soleiman  
That, from the rose-bed of Saba, tidings of joy brought.* (145)

*Last night, news to me the messenger of the morning wind brought,  
Saying: "To shortness, its face, the day of labor and of grief hath brought."* (147)

*O heart! glad tidings that the morning breeze hath come back,  
From the quarters of Saba the lap-wing of good news hath come back* (174)

#### 3.2. Two Way Informer (Courier)

The term "Courier" refers to that role of Saba Wind whereby it exchanges information between the two participants communicating, as opposed to acting one way and bringing messages to the poet. The communication partner of the poet may be either the beloved or others. Therefore, Saba Wind carries information from the poet to the communication partner and vice versa.

### 3.2.1. Between Poet and the Beloved

Saba Wind is always coming and going between the lover and beloved. The lover particularly wants it to never leave him uninformed of the beloved. It is the dominant role of Saba Wind and is represented in 13 ghazals—one or more lines in each ghazal—where Hafez appoints Saba Wind to perform this task.

*With softness speak to the beautiful fawn, O breeze!*

*Saying: Thou hast given to us desire for the mountain and the desert. (4)*

*The disciple of the cup of Jamshid is Hafez. O breeze, go:*

*And give salutation from the slave to the Shaikh of Jam. (7)*

*O breeze! if again thou reach the youths of the meadow,*

*Convey our service to the cypress, the rose, and the sweet basil. (9)*

*O lapwing of the east wind! to Saba, I send thee:*

*Behold from where to where, I send thee! (90)*

*O breeze! utter a secret of my love to the sovereign of the lovely ones,*

*Who, as the meanest slave, a hundred Jamshids and Kay-Khosros hath (121)*

*To Him, of our tale none can utter;*

*Perchance, its reporting the morning breeze maketh (189)*

*For Thee, the wind and for me the water of the eye became informers:*

*If not, mystery-keepers the lover and the Beloved are. (195)*

### 3.2.2. Between Poet and Others

*O breeze! from us, to the dwellers of Yazd say:*

*The head of those not recognizing truths the polo ball of yours. (12)*

*O breeze! If thou see my heart on that tress-tip,*

*By way of kindness, speak to it; that its own place it may preserve. (122)*

*Gentle breeze bestow this feast with plentiful horn*

*The bearer, with a cup or two, those like me may scorn. (390)*

## 4. Saba as Communicator

Communicating with the poet as a rational human being indicates a vital role in human communication which undoubtedly makes of Saba something more than a mere informer. Here Saba is able to enter into conversation and interaction with the poet.

*So that, everywhere, it may not boast of the evening of Thy tress-tip,*

*Conversation with the breeze, mine a morning is nor that is not (73)*

## 5. Saba and the Necessity of Not Knowing

Despite its various communicative roles, Saba Wind should sometimes remain silent and unaware. Knowing that Saba is a telltale, the poet now and then wishes that it remains unaware so as not to reveal his secrets. There are a few poems where Hafez considers the unawareness of Saba Wind as necessary.

## 6. Saba as an Informed Source

Saba is informed of two issues: first, the distressing situation of the lover/poet who suffers from the absence of the beloved - and this is because Saba is intimate with the poet; second, where the beloved lives since Saba is her confidant and travels from her to the lover to bring him messages. Thus, the poet considers Saba Wind a witness to his love and, therefore, in some lines is called an informed source.

### 6.1. A Source Informed of the Lover

*Of our straitened heart, gives the breeze what news,  
That, like the folding of the leaves of the rosebud, tightly folded it is.* (58)

*When from around lover's heart, He loosed the snare of the tress,  
To the informer of the wind, He speaketh saying: "Secret, our mystery, he hath."* (120)

*Hafez consumed; and took not the perfume of the Beloved's tress:  
Perchance, the guide of this fortune of his, the wind maketh.* (187)

### 6.2. A Source Informed of the Beloved

*Of whom, may I ask the trace of the Beloved, many a journey made?  
For whatever the wind's messenger uttered, confusedly he uttered.* (88)

*O wind! if thou have the remedy, this time the time:  
For, design upon my soul, the pain of desire made.* (137)

*I sacrifice my life in the trap of your hair  
O morning breeze speak of the stranger in the night* (415)

## 7. Saba as Channel

The most important communicative aspect of Saba in Hafez's poems is perhaps as a transmitting channel— a critical role in communication sciences. As well as transmitting messages and information, this time Saba channels the scent of the beloved to the poet. This causes the meaning, which is the remembrance of the beloved, to crystallize in the poet's mind. David Berlo, a communication theorist, commented in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1960), "We have all heard the tale of the person who, when asking why a pig is called pig, is told "because it's dirty."

We use language to express and extract meanings. Meaning is inseparable from most of the definitions of language. In teaching communication to others, in communicating among ourselves, in criticizing the communication of others, and in all similar cases, we should always focus our attention on meaning. Obviously, meaning depends on the codes we select in communication. In using language, we put our intentions into messages and responses that we have encoded (Mohseniyan-raad, 82).

In fact, the gist of Berlo's theory is that meaning does not lie in the message, rather it is in the receiver's mind:

*In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled  
A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed*

Therefore, Saba confirms Berlo's opinion whenever it conveys the scent of the beloved to the lover. As well as carrying scents which create meaning in minds, Saba carries other concepts and plays a pivotal role in the communication process.

### 7.1. Carrying the Beloved's Scent

*By reason of the perfume of the musk-pod, that, at the end, the breeze displayed from that forelock, From the twist of its musky curl, what blood befell the hearts! (1)*

*Along with the wind, send from Thy cheek a handful of roses:  
It may be that I may perceive a perfume from the dust of the rose garden of Thin. (12)*

*O Breeze! If thy path should chance by the Land of the Friend.  
Bring a fragrant waft of air from the be-perfumed tress of the Friend. (61)*

*Where is the breeze? For this life, blood gathered, like the rose,  
A sacrifice for the perfume of the Beloved's tress, I will make. (135)*

*At morning time, a perfume from the Beloved's tress, the breeze brought:  
Into action, our heart distraught for Thee brought. (146)*

*In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled  
A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed; (243)*

*Fragrance of oriental perfumes do not begin to approach  
That aromatic breeze, that life-giving morning sign (357)*

### 7.2. Carrying Other Concepts

*Through shame of that one who likened it to thy face,  
Dust into her own mouth, by the hand of the wind, the lily cast. (16)*

*The hope of my friend's home is my water of life  
Let the scent of Shiraz upon the breeze set sail. (333)*

*Blow our dust O gentle breeze And throw at the Master's knees  
The Good King has the keys While we glance at the sign (374)*

## 8. The Harbinger of Saba

Although frequently attributing physical roles to Saba and, as mentioned earlier, personifying it sometimes as a human, Hafez objects to its slow movements - which are due to its nature - to such an extent that sometimes he mentions Saba as being sick. What is indeed important is that Saba also takes the role of a steed or courier and uses this physicality in transmitting the message, information, and concepts to complete its communicative roles and indicate that it occupies a complex position in Hafez's poetry.

*If from Thee, the footman of the east wind will learn work possible:  
For movement, swifter than this, the wind made not. (138)*

Phrase	Frequency	Percent
<i>Khabar</i> (news)	5	41.66
<i>Agahi</i> (tidings)	2	16.66
<i>Payam</i> (message)	1	8.33
<i>Peygham</i> (message)	1	8.33
<i>Mozhdeh</i> (good news)	3	25
<b>Total Number</b>	12	100

Table 2: Frequency of different communicative forms of the word "message" in the sample.

Phrase	Frequency	Percent
<i>Bu</i> (smell)	8	47.05
<i>Nek-hat</i> (scent)	5	29.41
<i>Nafheh</i> (scent)	1	5.88
<i>Mo'anbar</i> (scented)	1	5.88
<i>Moshk-bu</i> (scented)	1	5.88
<i>Moshk</i> (perfume)	1	5.88
<b>Total Number</b>	17	100

Table 3: Frequency of the word "scent" and its synonyms in the sample.

## Conclusion

In the modern world, where media are a prime focus and their content informs the public and helps them make daily decisions, more attention should be paid to their content. A critical study and analysis of Persian texts of the past can help improve the current state of the media in the country since in the works of well-known poets of centuries ago, there are many concepts that can be harnessed to implement the communicative aims of the mass media as well as in improving their audience in all aspects, including cultural.

The media in Iran are not in an acceptable situation since the print media, especially newspapers, are connected to the government and political parties and, instead of being informative, reflect political conflicts in domestic and foreign issues. At the same time, audiovisual media - especially television channels which are under the strict control of the government - are more inclined to provide banal and entertaining programs without any useful content, and sports programs such as football matches are replacing cultural and artistic programs. Most programs lack worthwhile content and tend to imitate common foreign programs. They are, in fact, setting aside the Iranian essence and history while Iran is bombarded with satellite channels, and no measures are taken against these attacks.

Simply studying communicative theories from Western thinkers is not sufficient; rather we need to domesticate the current knowledge along with purposeful extracting of the resources inherited from our past figures of science and literature. After examining old Persian works of prose and verse, we see that communication theories and principles generally accepted as originating from the West were in fact already integral in the discourse of poets and mystics in the Persian and Islamic world who had used them in communicating their messages to their audience. This makes it more important for research into literary works of the past to shed light on the communication models in the time of Hafez.

As we have seen, Saba Wind may undertake most of the roles of the communication process, from sender to receiver. Playing eight communicative roles for a single concept is indicative of the richness of content, the attention paid by the poet to the components of a communication process, as well as the correct and intelligent use of it in implementing the poet's intended communicative aim. Hafez appoints Saba to the role of a channel which carries the beloved's scent, particularly in these lines: "In the morning breeze, your scent, whoever inhaled A close friend these familiar words, in his ear hailed," underlining a subtle point that would be stated centuries later by David Berlo as a universal theory that meaning lies not in the message but in the receiver's mind, a theory that became widely popular among media scholars.

## References

- Barnlund, Dance. A Transactional Model of Communication. 1970. In K.K. Sereno and C.D. Mortensen (Eds.), *Foundations of Communication Theory*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Berlo, David K. *The Process of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1960.
- De Saussure, F. *Neshaneshenasi-ye Karbordi [Applied Semiotics]*. Translated by Farzan Sojodi, Tehran: Ghese Publications, 2003.
- Eslami-Nodushan, M. A. *Buy dar Nazd-e Hafez: She'r va Zendegi-ye Hafez [Scents in Hafez's Poetry: Hafez's Life and Poetry]*, 2007.
- Farhangi, A. *Ertebatat-e Ensani [Human Communications]*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Rasa Institute Publications. 2008.
- Hafez, S. M. Edited by Mohammad Ghazvini and Ghasem Ghani, Tehran: Asatir. 1989.
- Langeroudi, M. SH. *Tarikh-e Tahlili-e Shere No [Analytical History of Modern poetry]*. Tehran: Markaz Publications, 1989.
- McQuail, D. *Daramadi bar Nazariyeh-ye Ertebatat-e Ejtema'i [Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction]*. Translated by Parviz Ejlali. Tehran: The Office of Development and Studies of Media, 2009.
- Mo'tamed-nezhad, K. *Vasayel-e Ertebat-e Jam'i [Means of Mass Communication]*. Tehran: Tehran University Press, 2007.
- Mohsenian-Rad, M. *Ertebatshenasi [Communicology]*. Tehran: Soroush, 2008.
- Mohsenian-Rad, M. *Risheha-ye Farhangi-ye Ertebat dar Iran [Cultural Roots of Communication in Iran]*. Tehran: Chapar Publications, 2008.
- Nasiri-Jami, H. 'Razmandi-ye Bad-e Saba dar She'r-e Hafez [Mysteriousness of Saba Wind in Hafez's Poetry]'. *Fasnameh-ye She'r va Adab (7)*, 2009.
- Schramm, Wilbur. *How Communication Works in the Process and Effect of Communication*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1954.
- Severin, W. and James Tankard. *Nazariyeh-haye Ertebatat [Communication Theories]*. Translated by Alireza Dehghan. Tehran: Tehran University Press, 2007.
- Shannon & Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, University of Illinois Press, 1949.