

The Present of Goethe's Spiritual Travel to Hafez's Territory (West-Östlicher Divan)

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Abstract

The European authors and thinkers in classic period and particularly Romantic one were searching the root and basis of European culture and languages. The decoding of Sanskrit emphasized the centrality of the Orient for European culture. Goethe, the famous poet and author of Germany, under the influence of this movement and for his own interest, studied the works of orientalist too. Although he never went to the Orient, however, the study and survey of the translation the books by the Orient authors and poets, for him, was spiritual travel to the Orient. Particularly, during the study and survey he acquainted with the poetical works of Hafez which exerted a strong influence on him and thus he created an attractive compilation in German language. The West-östlicher Divan of Goethe is the result of his spiritual travel to the Orient and, in effect, it is a description which joins the two poles of world (East and West). The description of Goethe's life, his spiritual travel to the east, his acquaintance with Hafez and finally the West-östlicher Divan form the four parts of this article.

Key words: Hafez, Goethe, The Orient, West-Östlicher Divan, Romantic Period, Language Root.

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"More pleasant than the sound of love's speech, naught I heard;

a great token, that in this revolving dome remained" (Hafez, 2002, p. 240).

Hafez's poetry is entirely a passion and love story. For this reason, it remained in this revolving dome, became eternal and after about four hundred years, is vested in Goethe, the famous author and poet of Germany and exerted a strong influence on him, so that he created an attractive compilation in German language. In effect, Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan* is the echo of Hafez's love speech and is inspired by his poetry.

All of us know about the effect that Hafez has on Goethe and his poetry, but our information about the quantity of this effect and the quality of his book, is not sufficient. Some people imagine erroneously that *West-östlicher Divan* is a translation of Hafez's poems or it is a book about Hafez and his life. Although it may be said that, during the compiling of *West-östlicher Divan*, Hafez had been a source of inspiration for Goethe; but this literary work has his own special style and context. About these two poets Johann Christoph Bürgel, Swiss orientalist, says that: "One of the most beautiful events of the world literature history is the contact of these two speech stars with each other." (Büergel, 1999, p. 36).

Hafez as one of the greatest composer of lyric poetry, is a well-known poet for all of us. Many people believe his poetry in such an extent that they augur with it and ask him for help in their affairs and works; but in Iran there are few persons who know Goethe as he is deserved. Many people

imagine that he is only a poet and may be ask from themselves as what is the cause of his extra fame? A growing recognition of Goethe and his personality highlights the importance of Hafez influence on this author. Therefore, we consider briefly his life and its important points, especially in relation to Orient.

A Review of Goethe's Life

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born in Frankfurt, on the 28th of August 1749 and passed away at the apogee of his fame in the year 1832 (Wetzel, 1987, pp. 83-85). His father, Johann Kaspar, was a lawyer and his mother, Katharina Elisabeth Textor, was the daughter of mayor and belonged to a famous family. He completed his primary and secondary education near his father and tutor. From the prime of his youth, he was reading torah (the Old Testament) beside evangelic he was accumulating the knowledge of Hebrew. With his own efforts and active help of his father, he learnt divers languages such as Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Italian and French. At the age of 16 (1765), to accomplish his father's desire, he engaged in acquiring higher education in the field of Law in Leipzig and after a pause (two years), in 1771, he ended this field of study. He composed his first poems in this seventeenth year and wrote "a Lover Mood" play at the age of eighteen.

Goethe greeted Johann Gottfried von Herder, the German philosopher and poet in "Strassburg" as Herder made him acquainted with the literary works of Rousseau's, Shakespeare and Homer's and writings of Hamann, national ballad and the poems of the Old Testament. In 1772, he translated

a part of An'am Surah into German and this translation became the basis of "Mohammed Drama", which remained incomplete.

In 1774, Goethe wrote "Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers" novel, which found many adherents and readers, and had been translated into different languages. This was the first literary work of Germany, which entered in universe literature so far as Napoleon read it seven times. For many people Goethe, up to the end of his life remained only the author of "Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers". His fame surpassed his birthplace and the celebrated persons of that age like: "Johann Kaspar Lavater" (author), "Friedrich Jakobi" (philosopher), "Wilhelm Heine" and "Klopstock" (poets) got acquainted to him and gained the glory of his amity. In 1775, an the invitation of "Karl August", the Prince of Sachsen-Weimar, he went to his court and very soon, he assumed, as a minister and was given, the responsibility of financial and military affairs and assistance, in his court.

In Weimar's court, Goethe acquainted with Christoph Martin Wieland, famous German Poet, and also he communicated with Romantic theoreticians like Schlegel brothers and Schelling. In 1779 he acquainted with the famous German author and poet "Friedrich Schiller in Stuttgart and this amity was continued until the the latter died in 1805. They created some literary works together and on the whole, their contact is counted as a turning point, in the literature of Germany chiefly, in Weimar's Classic literature.

In 1782, Joseph II, the king of Austria, promoted Goethe to the rank of nobility. In 1783,

he translated a poem of "Moallakat" (William Jones: The Mollakat or Seven Arabian Poems, London 1783). And in 1797, he commenced to study about the five books of His Holiness the prophet Moses that is known as Moses' five Books in Torah; and the results of theses researches in the prose part of West-östlicher Divan, entitled "Israel Tribe in Desert". Generally, he was very inclined to do research about different religions and he studied "the Most Ancient Document", the literary work of Herder, which was about the Jews and Zoroastrians' religion.

After ten years stay in Weimar and accepting different responsibilities, while he was spending his time with Prince of Weimar and Herder in Karlsbad, he escaped to Italy. And after two years stay in Rome, Nepal and Sicily, he finally returned to Weimar and with the permission, he retired from the most part of his governmental posts. This travel played an important role in his life and he says that from the day when he comes to Rome, he is born once again. Under the influence of this travel, he composed the poems, known as Römische Elegien. In the year 1776, he married "Christiane Vulpis" . From 1791 up to 1818, he was the chief of Royal Theater.

In the years 1798-99 Goethe reads Herder's novel articles, which was about "Persepolis" and "One Thousand and One Nights" and in the year 1797 he translated a fragment of Voltaire's literary work about His Holiness the prophet Mohammed entitled "Mahomet-Drama" in Germany. This play was performed in Weimar on 30th January. In 1808 under the influence of Friedrich Schlegel, he commenced to study about Indian language and

literature and through the inspiration of an Indian story, he wrote a play "Der Gott und die Bajadere". "Laly and Majnoun", "Yusuf and Zuleihka" and "Solomon and the Queen of Saba" stories and Asian travelogues like "Pietro della Valle" and "Markopolo" and the literary works of famous orientalists of Europe.

Finally, in 1814, when he was sixty-five years old, he acquainted with complete translation of Hafez's Divan, which was the literary work of Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, an Austrian orientalist; and thus he began to compile West-östlicher Divan. To have a better comprehension of Hafez and Iranian culture, he continued extensive studies about Orient. The literary works, which he read consist of:

1. The works about the life of the prophet Mohammed, the literary work of Oelsner, Rehbindler Turpin and Boulainvillers;

2. Literary works of famous poets of Iranian literature, like; Mowlavi, Nezami, Sa'adi, Jami and Anvari;

3. Sa'adi's Gulistan;

4. Shahnameh;

5. Gabousnameh;

6. Attar's Pandnameh;

7. Fundgrüben des Orients and, Joseph von Hammer Purgstall's work;

8. The history of Iranian's figures of speech, "Joseph von Hammer Purgstall"'s work;

9. "Denkwürdigkeiten von Asien", "Diez"'s work;

10. Oriental collections;

11. The travelogues of Della Valle, Tavernier and Chardin.

Even Goethe tried to learn Persian language and according to his statement, for letters learning, he trained by Paulus for fourteen days. In addition to it, he was listening to Serenissima's orations about Ferdowsi; and there was an exchanges of views between him and the famous orientalists of his age, such as Diez, Lorsbach and Silvestre de Sacy. All of these studies prepared the ways for writing the prose part of West-östlicher Divan, under the title of "Noten und Abhandlungen". Finally the compilations of Divan came to an end and for the first time it was printed in 1819.

During the years, Goethe not only compiled the important works like "Die Leiden des jungen Werthers", "Faust", "Torquato Tasso", "Wilhelm Meister", "Egmont", "Hermann und Dorothea", and "West-östlicher Divan", but also proceeded to study the other domains like natural sciences, especially mineral materials, botany, anatomy and chromatology. He presented a novel theory about dyes and he could find out the middle bone of human jaw. In the year 1788 he developed the theory of principal plant or, in other words, ancient plant, which was indeed a base and fundamental in structural perception of every natural phenomenon. It is worth mentioning that his studies in the natural sciences domain were not only the independent studies besides his writings. Rather, these studies had direct influence on his points of view and insights and their effects are entirely apparent in his poems, writings and vision of the world. Not only the most parts of Goethe's works was printed in his lifetime, but also some of his plays were performed in the theatre. In his lifetime he was so famous that he attended in every banquet

and ceremony and have an interview or a meeting with him was counted a glory.

Goethe was a poet, a playwright, a novelist, a critic of the literature and art, a politician, a researcher of the natural sciences, and a artful painter. It is not, therefore, undue that he has been named the genius of his age. He is the sole German writer that a literary period - containing the periods of Deluge and Struggle, Classic and Romantic - has been called by his name i.e. "The Period of Goethe". Goethe created many valuable literary works, during his eighty-three-year-old life. He engaged in important jobs, corresponded and frequented by many scholars, thinkers and philosophers and he achieved to meet the outstanding personalities like Napoleon, Hegel and Beethoven.

It should be noted that the influence of Hafez on such an outstanding personality, is really a matter of extra importance.

Acquaintance with Hafez

Let see Goethe's statements and his opinion about Hafez. After the study of the translation of Hafez's Divan, on 7 June 1814, he writes in his diary: "before, I had read some translations of this precious poet's poetry in the journals and I had not grasped the matter; but, at present, after reading the whole of his poems, I become touched by them in such a manner that I engaged to compose the poems in their response, because I could not endure against this magnificent phenomenon. These poems exerted a strong and vivid influence on me. Their German translations were in front of me and I must have prepared the means that I can

personally have a share in them." (Goethe, 1951, p. 368). As it is considered, it seems that Goethe's rejoicing has reached such a point that he must personally start on a work and pens the poems. He can not stay calm, he must create and employ his creative power. His tameness with Hafez reaches such a point that the study of his divan is being formed a part of his daily studies and, in his memories, he remembers it as "the book of books" (Goethe, 1951, p. 376). He writes the second book of West-östlicher Divan, under the title of Hafez and he allocates a part of the memorandums of his divan to Hafez too. His respect and interest to this Persian poet arrive at such a point that he addresses Hafez and writes:

"Whether world becomes ruined or not,
Hafez! I want only you
as my rival.

The happiness and the sorrow, for us, the twins,
are alike.

This should be my glory and life,
that I love and drink wine like you." (Goethe, 1981, p. 25).

As it is arisen from this poem, Goethe, totally ignores the temporal and spatial distance, which exists between Hafez and himself and he feels such a close relationship with this Persian poet that he calls him, his twin brother. In other place he mentions like this:

"Oh! Saint Hafez! They
called you mystic tongue.
They who know dialectic science,
do not recognize the value of the word.
They named you Gnostic,
because they think that you are frenzied

and pour their mixed wine
with your name, into the bowel,
but you are a pure mystic,
because they do not perceive you.
You are who, without abstinence, are delivered.
They do not want to believe this about you."
(Goethe, 1981, p. 26).

He knows very well, why the pseudonym of the master of Shiraz is "Hafez" and he alludes to this fact in the memorandums of his Divan. Learning the Qoran by heart causes that Goethe calls Hafez, "saint" and "the mystic tongue".

Goethe indicates somewhere that the comprehension of Hafez is very difficult and despite this he writes in a letter that he has comprehended the internal substance of Hafez. The highest point of this interest and attachment to Hafez is seen in one of the imprinted poems of his divan, which was enclosed to it later:

"Hafez! What frenzy is,
knowing myself similar to you.
You ride forward, like a ship, on the waves of
the sea,
with hoisted sails,
bold and proud,
and I look like a piece of board
buoyant...ensnared by the hand of the ocean.
In your fine and hasted ballads
a calmativ current, governs,
gushes and clamors,
until it become fiery wave,
but this fire folds me.
Suddenly, a thought strikes me,
which gives me the courage.
Yeah! I, too, in a territory by the luminescence

of the sun

have lived and loved." (Goethe, 1981, p. 280).

Goethe's intention of the expression of "a territory by the luminescence of the sun" is Italy where he had traveled to for two times.

Goethe's Spiritual Travel to the East

By the way, what is the cause of Goethe's feeling for Hafez? For him, the acquaintance with Hafez Divan and other eastern works, meant an opening window to another world and he sets out for the East, with a strong desire and a great interest. At the assembling time of the West-östlicher Divan, in 1815, he writes in his diary like this:

"In regard to the sense and content, whatever, for me, was similar to the area of existence, appears; so intense that I felt that I had to run away from a real world, which menaces me in solitude, to a visionary world; the same world, which having a share in it depends on my desire, power and will." (Goethe, 1981, p. 369).

As we see, for Goethe, the real world is menacing; he escapes from there and takes refuge in a territory, which he can draw, according to his aptitude and wish. The first poem of Goethe in his Divan, entitled "Departure", is one of the most beautiful poems and the best document for this spiritual travel:

"Hegira"

"The North, the South and the West disconnect
from each other.

The thrones of the kings, break and their
dynasties are destroyed.

Come to escape and in the limpid East,

feel the pure air of our ancestors.
With wine and minstrel,
with love,
the spring of Elias rejuvenates you.

In that place,
in purity, honesty and luminance,
I want to discover the essence of human
existence.

In that place, where they received the celestial
wisdom in terrestrial language,
and they did not dispute.
Where they respecting the fathers highly
and they were not at the service of every alien.
I want to break, there, the dam of youth,
where the reliances, were deep and the thoughts
were great

and the word was important,
because it has flowed over tongue.

I want to live there with shepherds,
and repose in caravansaries, one moment,
and when I am setting out with caravans,
I trade in shawl, coffee and ambergris.

I want to walk in every obscure narrows path,
from sahara toward towns." (Goethe, 1981, p.
9).

Hugo von Hofmannsthal, a German author
indicates that: "this poem not only makes appeared
the marvelous world of the East, but also manifests
a great spirit, which is fascinated by the word"
(Hofmannsthal, 1999, p. 362).

This poem makes appeared the phenomenon of
evasion and the phenomenon of inclination. The
evasion indicates aversion, insecurity and decline.
The author escapes from the North, the South and
the West, which are governed by decline and

rupture. The only way of deliverance leads to the
East, where the spring of the Elias i.e. the secret of
youth and eternity can be found by the leaven of
love.

Now, we ask ourselves why Goethe embarks on
this travel? What does hurt him that he escapes
from the west and what does he desire that he
resort to the East? There were three reasons for his
travel: first, because at his time the political
conditions were very hazardous, as an example, we
can allude to the occupation of his birthplace,
Frankfurt, by the French soldiers during the
septennial wars and also the French Revolution
and its results for Germany. For a poet like Goethe,
except impairment and destruction, what else could
be the presents of the war?

The second reason of his travel was his
detestation from the administrative occupations
and the politics of the court that were inconsistent
with his sensitive spirit and literary talent and he
shows this, very well, in the drama "Torquato
Tasso". After ten years, in 1786, fatigued from the
court milieu, he goes, suddenly and in effect
secretly, from Karlsbad to Italy. In fact, he travels
for deliverance from politics and the struggles of
the court. He writes, in this case: "here, it must
remind one of my characteristic features. When a
menacing and great problem was being revealed in
the world of politics, I was taking refuge in the
farthest thing. Therefore, when I returned from the
travel of "Karlsbad", I proceeded to study about the
China Empire" (Haidarian, 1999, pp. 39-40).

Accordingly, although the travel to the East was
formed only in the imagination of Goethe, it was a
means of escape from the politics problems and the

stresses and it also was away of finding the security and the tranquility. In addition to this, he knew Hafez as his twin brother. Was is not this that Hafez was observing the killing and the bloodshed and the disorganized conditions of his country, during Teymurids, and he was trying to pass his clam life, far from the disputes and disturbed conditions of that time, in a secluded corner? For Goethe, Napoleon had the same role, which Teymur was playing for Hafez.

We can justify the third reason of the spiritual travel of Goethe like this: when, in the arena of literature, the Romantic period replaces the Classic one. The feeling of an intense tendency for the unity and the oneness is observed and an ardent desire for the recognition of the roots of languages, the ceremonies, the mores and the culture of Europe is created and develops at this time. The Romantic authors of Germany also search for their lost objet, between the ancient literary works of the East. The discovery of the Sanskrit language causes that the Europe is known as the original land of the European cultures. Goethe is also in search of the roots of European culture in the East. He exceeds this and says: "I want to discover the essence of human existence in the East." (Goethe, 1981, p. 9).

As it is seen, although, Goethe's travel to the East has formed in his imagination, it seems really that he has gone there, has breathed in the air of the East and has acquainted with the Orientals. He did not confine his travel to the East to one time, on the contrary, while he was composing his divan and was studying the oriental literary works, he was living in the East. His present from this travel

is the same West-östlicher Divan, which is typically grafter of these two terrestrial hemispheres.

West-Östlicher Divan

This divan is partly in poetry and partly in prose. Its poetical part is composed of 12 books and Goethe has given to each one, both a Persian name and a German title:

- 1- Book of Singer (Moganni Nameh)
- 2- Book of Hafez
- 3- Book of Love
- 4- Book of Excommunication
- 5- Book of Passion
- 6- Book of Wisdom
- 7- Book of Teymur
- 8- Book of Suleika
- 9- Book of Saki (Saki Nameh)
- 10- Book of Proverb
- 11- Book of Persian
- 12- Book of Paradise

The titles of "Moganni" and "Saki Nameh" have been directly excerpted from Hafez's Divan. According to Hans-J. Weitz's statement, these twelve books can be divided into four parts. The first three books addressed to Hafez; the Forth, fifth and sixth book, about thinking; the next three books are about persons, and the last three books are about the problems of religions.

The content of the prose part is historical and biographical. During the composition of this part, Goethe is, specially, under the influence of two books: "Fundgrüben des Orients", the literary work of Hammer Purgstall, and "Denkwürdigkeiten von Asien", the literary work of Von Diez. The prose

part, as an useful guidebook makes acquainted the Western readers with the culture of the East and specially with the mood and the ecstasy of the Persian literature and helps them comprehend the poetry part. We can say that, without reading the memorandums, it is almost impossible to comprehend the poems of divan. Goethe in the introduction of the prose part quotes this quatrain:

"One who wants to versify,
must go to the territory of poem.
One who wants to perceive the poet,
must go to the territory of poet." (Goethe, 1981, p. 127).

The prose part of divan, entitled "Noten und Abhandlungen" consists of the three parts: the first part is a brief summary of the Near East countries' religious and literary history. The second part, with a view to the quality - and the type of poem, describes the differences and the boundaries, which exist between the East and the West. And the third part contains the articles, which are about the European orientalist and tourists, and their travelogues.

On the whole, Goethe's divan is counted one of his difficult works and its comprehension is not possible for all. From the first impression of Divan up to its last print, its title has been changed four times, in this manner:

1. Poems, addressed to Hafez
2. German poetry compilation in regard to the divan of Persian poet, Mohammed Shamseddin Hafez
3. The West-östlicher Divan or the compilation of German poetry in constant relation to the East
4. West-östlicher Divan (Goethe, 1981, p. 297).

In the first two titles, which Goethe chose for his book, the direct relation with Hafez's poetry is quite clear. Indeed, his divan contains the poems, which are directly an adaptation of one of Hafez's couplets. In the first exposition, which Christian Wurm writes to the West-östlicher Divan, he specifies these couplets with their sources, i.e. the number of ode (ghazal) and the number of couplet in the Hafez Divan. These couplets are thirty-seven in number. The manner of relation with couplets or making use of them is in this manner that Goethe takes a symbol or a phenomenon from a couplet of Hafez and makes it the basis and the foundation of his poetry. In effect, all of the meaning of that poem is taken from symbol. He develops this symbol throughout the whole of the poem and produces a new sense from it. For example, Goethe has been inspired by the famed ode of Hafez, with this opening couplet:

"If that fairy (Turk) of Shiraz gain our heart,
for his dark mole, I will give Samarkand and Bokhara."

And he brings that in his divan like this:

"Oh, my dear!
Would I have to be worried,
if I offered you,
Balkh, Bokhara, and Samarkand
and their splendor, glory, and elevation.
Oh, dear! Ask king.
Does he bestow these territories on you?
He is greater and saner,
but he does not know how he can make love.
Oh, king! For offering such presents,
you will never be ready.
It must have such a beloved,

and be such a poor,
like me." (Goethe, 1981, pp. 72-73).

We ought to heed to this point that despite Hammer's mediocre translation of Hafez, Goethe, in his *divan* applies the phenomena and the similes, which are very current and acquainted in Hafez's *Divan*. For example, we can allude to the phenomena like destiny, sky, world, candle, moralizer, soil, and the dust of friend territory, cypress, messenger and courier.

Here, it must allude to the problem, which always is proposed about Goethe's *Divan*. The question is this: which elements of his *divan* are eastern and which are western? And, essentially, what is Goethe's intention from the setting of the East beside the West? As a whole it must be said that Goethe's *divan* is entirely full of eastern atmosphere. In fact, when a Persian reader goesthrough this *divan*, he does not feel nostalgic. In fact, the union, which has been created by Goethe between Persian terms and Western contexts is so firm, as if there is no distance between the East and the West. Because of studying the eastern works, most of the symbols, phenomena and similes of Persian literature have been mixed with the spirit of this German poet.

The utilization of these terms looks an evident fact for him. Goethe confesses that he tried to compose the ode, but he has not succeeded in this task. The structure of the ode is very exotic for his mind. What that is discussed about Persian ode and specially Hafez's ode, is about their disconnection. But when Goethe takes a symbol from Hafez's poetry, he extends it, in his own manner, in the

whole of the poem and sometimes he creates the new contexts from it, which is entirely different from Hafez's poetry. And in this regard we can say that his *divan*, from an external dimension, is an amalgamation of the eastern and western elements. Goethe says:

"One who recognizes himself and others,
he also recognizes that the East and the West
are inseparable.

With emotion between two worlds,
Oscillating ... this is my recommendation.

Yes! Between the East and the West,
"going and coming" are the best works."
(Goethe, 1981, p. 279).

Mohammed Haydariyan says: "For Goethe paying attention to the eastern elements is a means for retiring from partial judgement and whatever that is illogical between the citation of the Westerners. Besides, he wants to step beyond the limits of a culture and allude to human element, universal element, West-östlicher element. As he was saying himself: only the humanity is a real human and a person can happy and welfare on conditions that he has the courage of knowing himself as a part of the whole." (7, Heidarian, 1999, pp. 46-47).

About West-östlicher *Divan*, Hugo von Hofmannsthal writes: "Everything is seen from two dimension and it is exactly for this reason that it permeates us because the reality, which exist in our interior and exterior, is always inexplicit; but a poet has permission to say everything" (Hofmannsthal, 1981, p. 361). And in other place he indicates: "This book is entirely spirit. What

that Goethe names "super conductive power", governs over this book (...). This book is not comprehensible for all, but in spite of this it is similar to an evangelic. One of the books, which are difficult, because these kinds of books have a real nature and in such books each thing alludes to another thing." (Hofmannsthal, 1981, p. 359).

In his book, by bringing the eastern elements beside the western ones, Goethe wants to show that these are the two faces of the same coin and in fact there is not any difference between them. The power, which unites the west with the east, the south and the north and is situated above all, is God. In effect where he is, all names, titles, disunion and limits and frontiers disappear. The West and the East and the South and the North unite until that supreme power remains permanent.

"The East belongs to God.

The West belongs to God.

The North, and the South territories,
have calmed in the serenity of his hands.

He (who is), the sole just being,
wants justice for all.

Be it so that, from his hundred names,
this name was more adored.

The mistake leads me to the perversion,
but you deliver me,
in the deeds and in the words.

Be my guide. Amen!" (Goethe, 1981, p. 12).

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حمیده بهجت^۱

چکیده

نویسندگان و متفکران اروپایی در دوره کلاسیک و بخصوص رمانتیک در جست و جوی اصل و ریشه فرهنگ و زبانهای اروپایی بودند. کشف زبان سانسکریت تأکیدی بود بر این باور که مشرق زمین مبدأ اصلی تمدن اروپایی است. گوته شاعر و نویسنده توانای آلمان نیز تحت تأثیر این جنبش و بنابر علاقه شخصی خویش به مطالعه آثار شرق شناسان پرداخت اگر چه او هرگز به شرق نرفت، اما خواندن ترجمه کتب نویسندگان و شاعران شرقی برای او به منزله سفری معنوی به مشرق زمین محسوب می شد. بخصوص اینکه او در جریان این مطالعه و تحقیق با دیوان حافظ آشنا و چنان شیفته این شاعر بزرگ ایران گشت که شروع به تدوین اثری به جا ماندنی کرد. دیوان شرقی غربی گوته ره آورد سفر معنوی وی به مشرق زمین و در حقیقت شرحی از این گذر است که دو سوی جهان (شرق و غرب) را به هم پیوند می دهد. شرح زندگانی گوته، سفر روحانی او به شرق، آشنایی او با حافظ و سرانجام دیوان شرقی غربی، چهار بخش مقاله زیر را تشکیل می دهند.

کلید واژگان: حافظ، گوته، شرق، دیوان شرقی غربی، رمانتیک، دوره ، ریشه زبان

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