

ROLE OF MYSTIC PHILOSOPHER IN THE FIELD OF ARABIC POETRY

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Abstract: A mystic seeks by contemplation and self surrender to obtain union with or absorption into the divinity or believes in the spiritual apprehension of truth beyond the understanding. A mystic philosopher is one who takes the tension toward the transcendent divine ground of being as the cardinal attribute of human reality and explores the whole hierarchy of being from the decisive perspective. As we know poetry is the picture of the innermost feeling or imagination of poets and this picture depends upon the nature of thinking. Mystical poetry largely deals with the Sufi metaphysics. It may be defined as the representation of emotional feelings of Divine Love to God playing with visions of mystical reality through imagination, meditation, self realization as well as application of intellect in search of reality of universe with a rational expression in the form of poetry having vibrating and rhythmic musical sound. Arabic mystical poetry may be considered to be the ideal vehicle for spreading esoteric knowledge and vision of mystical realities. Mystical philosophy in Islam has included all intellectual perspectives, which considered not only reason, but also the heart intellect. In fact, heart intellect is the main instrument for the gaining of true knowledge. The most influential school of mystical philosophy came into existence with shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, who founded the school of Ishraq or illumination. Mystical philosophy is consists of several main strands, ranging from Isma'ili thought to the metaphysics of al-Ghazzali, Ibn al- 'Arabi and with a continuing powerful presence of scholars in the contemporary Islamic world. Mystical thinkers were conscious that they were advocating an approach to thinking and knowledge, which differed from much of the peripatetic traditions. However, they established a systematic approach which was often continuous with that tradition.

Index Terms : mystic, metaphysics, Mystical philosophy, peripatetic traditions.

Introduction:

It is a fact that mysticism or Sufism has received considerable attention from both Eastern and Western Scholars, but poetic outputs of mystic poets in Arabic have got less attention among the Eastern scholars. History of Arabic literature extends its literary attributes from Pre-Islamic period, i.e. 500 A.D. As regards to the Arabic mystic poets, they emerged in course of time both in Arab and Spain from 500 A.D. to 1258 A.D; an approximate of seven and half centuries. During this long period, Arabic mystical poetry produced at a great scale of highly esteemed for its literary embellishment and is considered to be the ideal vehicle for spreading inner spirit of religion as well as sense of humanity to conduct and regulate contemporary human behavior and morality.

The growing tendencies towards technical education and professional education have motivated the mankind towards material business and its phantom pleasure. The earthly business has made disguised the majority of people to realize the eternal feelings of love, beauty, truth and reality. Therefore, we may nourish and nurture us with the beam of morality of Sufis fabricated in their poetry and it may be used as a source to develop the spirit of brotherhood, integration as well as communal harmony among the mankind throughout the world. The theme of mystical poetry itself is spontaneous guide to mankind for right thinking and right action. Thus, mystical poetry exhorts incessant inspiration of peace, unity and fraternity in the every individual soul.

This article is an attempt to deal exclusively with Arabic mystical poetry composed by the philosophical mystic poets irrespective of caste, creed, sect, religion and country, keeping in mind the similarity in respect of Arabic language in their poetical compositions. An attempt has been made to rationalize imagery and vision of mystic poets represented in their poetry, which they obtained through rapture, meditation, and self mortification practices in pursuance of Divine Love and Beauty. Their mystical philosophy and visions of mystical reality absorbed in their poems are being attempted to rationalize for common understanding. Here I want to discuss about some prolific mystic philosopher of the Arabs and their contribution to the development of mystical poetry.

Role of Mystic Philosopher in the field of Arabic Poetry:

The mystical sense may be called philosophical in all those writers who present their conviction in a philosophical form calculated to appeal to intellect. These writers as a rule though not always are themselves markedly intellectual and their primary concern therefore is with truth or wisdom. Thus *Al Farabi* and *Ghazali* are predominantly intellectual and have enriched Arabic mystical poetry with their philosophical verse. Besides them *Abdul Qadir Jilani*, *Suhrawardy*, *Shahrazori*, *Ibn al farid* express their mystical thought in the language of philosophy through their poetry.

Al Farabi and his mystic philosophy in Arabic poetry:

Abu Nasr Mohammed Ibn Tarkhan Ibn Awazalah al-Farabi (870-950, A.D.) belongs to a Turkish family of *Transoxania*. He was born at *wasif* near *Farab*. At the age of fifty he meets for the first time, philosophers and translators in Baghdad. During this period he studied logic under *Bishr Matta Ibn Yunus*. He lived twenty years in Baghdad and then went to Aleppo and remained as a Sufi in the court of *Saif al-Dawala*. He wrote almost one hundred works on Philosophy, moral science, politics, mathematics,

alchemy and music. His metaphysical work, *Risalat Fusus al-Hikam* (epistle containing bezels of wisdom) and the *Risalah fi Ara' ahl al-Madinah al-Fadilah* (epistle on the opinion of the people of the superior city) are famous. Another work on politics is *al-Siyasah al-Madaniyah* (political regime) in which he inspired by Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics. He was called second Aristotle and the father of Muslim philosophy.

His *mystic-philosophical* belief regarding the absorption of human spirit into world spirit and finally into God, is a trend of his writings. He also used some technical Sufi terms for solution of philosophical problems. Philosophy is based on argument, reason and intellect, while mysticism is something more than these. Mystical experience is a taste which is better understandable by the language of heart. *Farabi* wrote his mystical taste in a treatise called *Kitab al-Fusus*, in which he interprets that 'no existence is more complete than His existence'. *Farabi* stated that God is Ultimate cause and ground of everything and the universe has emanated from Him. The true existence is spirit but it has various degrees and these degrees are depending on the practice of self realization, contemplation and practice of other means for purification of soul.

His Arabic mystical poetry contains the breath of purely mystical tune of *Hallaj* regarding the garden of gnosis as described in his book '*Kitab al-Tawasirf*.' as he recites:

نظرت بنور العلم اول نظرة	فغبت عن الاكوان و ارتفع اللبس
مازال قلبي لائذا بجمالهم	و جضرتكم حتي فنت فيكم النفس
فصار ليلي نهارا و ظلمي	ضياء و لاحت من جمالكم الشمس

*With a single glance I saw in the light of knowledge,
And I was obliterated to all existents and my doubts were dispelled.
My heart continued to take refuge in Thy beauty and presence,
Till, the self was annihilated in Thee.
My night was turned into day and my darkness was changed into luster,
And the sun of Thy beauty appeared.¹*

Here, the poet says that annihilation is the medium for acquiring knowledge of God. The poet enjoys the beauty and presence of God in his state of ecstasy. He realizes light of knowledge which removes darkness of his mind and he continued in his state of *fana* enjoying the beauty of God. The universe and its mystery lying behind it is so sublime that human knowledge and intellect is so insignificant to unfold it. Therefore, the philosophers are in confusion to bring the mystery of creation within the purview of their intellect. As such, Muslim philosophers were inclined towards mysticism for attainment of the knowledge of Ultimate Reality and thus the purpose of Muslim philosophy became to rationalize the mysticism owing to it a direct insight into the depth as yet unspoken.

Ghazzali and his mystic philosophy in Arabic poetry:

Abu Hamid Mohammad al-Ghazzali (1058-1111, A.D.) was born at *Tus*. He was commonly known as *Huzzat al-Islam* (proof of Islam). He was a great Muslim philosopher, theosophist and poet. *Ghazzali* expressed his views on the concept of human self, universe, God and His mysterious kingdom including heaven and hell, life after death etc. quite in conformity with the holy Qur'an and Islamic tradition. He clothed the Muslim philosophy with deep mystical ornamentation, for which Muslim world would ever remember him.

His poems are diffusing in the various prose works which are very magnitude and awe-inspiring to be called mystical. Among his poetry as recorded by his biographer, two odes deserve special attention are as follows:

1. *Qasiasat al-Haiya* (due to its rhyme ending in letter *Ha*) is a 'sublime ode, dealing with vices of his soul in the first twenty nine verses of the poem. In the subsequent verses he compares his selfhood with that of a mystic.
2. *Qasidat al-Taiya* (due to its rhyme ending in letter *Ta*) is a long poem consisting of about four hundred verses, which contains the gist of his teachings and hints at Divine mysteries. He ornamented the poem with Divine Love and ecstasy. His metaphysical, sublime and illuminative Knowledge beautified the poem with best artistic perfection.

Moreover, he composed a considerable number of Arabic mystical poetry. Some of them are distinctly mystic-philosophical, while others are inspired by profane love. The background of his poetry is his own philosophy, which he acquired by extensive travel and self experiences. Love is represented by *Ghazzali* as the final stage of mystic way, and as its goal. Man loves beauty by nature, and this natural love has close intimacy with soul. So, man loves God, because of the affinity between the man and soul. *Ghazzali* preferred to live in God by dying to self and desired to subsist in God, which he expressed in a beautiful love lyric:

سقمي في المحبة عافيتي	و وجودي في الهوي عدمي
و عذاب يرتضون به	في فمي احل من النعم
مالضر في محبتكم	عندنا و الله من الم

*Though love afflicts me, yet it is not grievous,
For death to self, means life in Thee my lover,
To suffer thirst, if that shall be Thy pleasure,
To me, is sweeter far, than all refreshment.
Nothing can grieve me now, save the divides me
From Thee but with Thee, naught has power to harm me.²*

¹ Ma'ssom Shirazi, *Taraiqa al-Haqaiq* (Tehran) vil. I, p. 384

Here, the poet describes that in the realm of Divine Love, he suffered many anxieties and hardships but he felt happy for sack of his pure love to God and he tried to die out his self undergoing sufferings for perfect dedication in his love.

Abdul Qadir Jilani and his mystic philosophy in Arabic poetry:

The founder of *Qadiriyya* order, *Ghauth al-Azam 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani* (1077-1166, A.D.) was born in the district of *Jilan* in Persia, south of the Caspian Sea. He got basic religious education under the guidance of his mother and maternal grandfather, *Abdullah Sumi*. When he was of five years, his mother sent him to a local school in *Jilan*, where he completed basic education in religious sciences. He continued his further education in *Jilan* up to the age of 18 years. He studied *Fiqh* (Islamic Law) under *Abu Saeed Mubarak*, *Tafsir* (Commentary of Holy Qur'an) under *Abu Qasim Ali*, Arabic Literature under *Abu Zakariya Yahya Tabrizi*, the principal of *Jamaliyah Nizamiyah*, in particular and he also learned under many other scholars of the school, in general. "*Abd al-Qadir Jilani* was a better *Theosophist*. He wrote many prose and poetry on Sufism in Arabic as well as in Persian language. he had written a considerable number of Arabic mystical poetry of highly spiritual flaming on the subject of mystic way and illumination. '*Diwan of Ghauth al-'Azam*' is containing of sixteen odes. The first of these is the longest *Mathnawi*, contains four hundred verses which is called '*aynia* (due to the rhyme ends in the letter '*ayri*). Nine of the remaining odes are ecstatic utterances and Divine illuminations. He often uses the symbol of wine to express his mystical experiences and states of annihilation. Sometimes, he breathes a vision of illuminative heart with colorful sublime thought in his poem. Tenth poem is a prayer for the removal of hardships, while the eleventh and twelfth throw light on the spiritual glory of the saint. The latter is more poetical and comparatively less egoistical.

His poetry *qasida al-Tayyia* is full of spiritual aspect. He often uses the symbol of wine to express his ardent love to God. *Jilani* drank the cup of love so severely that led him to the depth of Divine knowledge, even he could realized his earlier state of before his born in the phenomenal world. *Jilani* expresses his earlier state in a beautiful poem bearing a mysteries witness:

و من كان قبلي يدعي فيكم الهوي
شربت بكأسات الغرام سلافة
وطقت بباب الله وحدي موحد
و نوديتي يا جيلاني ادخل لحضرتي³
يطاولوني ان كان يقوى لسطوتي
بها انعشت قلبي و جسمي و مهجتي

*Prior to my advent whoever amongst you claimed Divine love,
Albeit powerful, has now surrendered before my sublimity.*

*I drank best of the wine of gnosis from cups of love which made my heart,
body and soul elevated.*

*Admitting the oneness of the Lord, I stood at His threshold alone. I was
called upon o' Jilani, enter into my presence.⁴*

Here, the poet describes his passion of love in symbolic term of wine. The poet drinks wine (Divine Love) but his love is due to cup bearers (Allah)! Because, the poet strongly claims that his remembrance is so strong that he could remember the old knowledge endowed with soul before his born in this world of phenomena.

Ibn al Farid and his mystic philosophy in Arabic poetry:

Sharaf al-Din Abu Hafis Umar Ibn al-Farid (1181-1235, A.D.) was born in Cairo. He belonged to a high respectable family of *Hamat* in Syria. His father was lieutenant of high court (*khalifat al-hukumi'l- aziz*) in Cairo and *Misr*. *Ibn al-Farid* studied law at *sha'fi* school of law. *Ibn al-Farid* was exclusive poet of Arabic mystical poetry literature. His poetry is the background of his mystical philosophy. The Egyptian *al-Farid* came of pure Arab stock, and his poetry is thoroughly Arabian both in form and spirit. He is excellent master of symbolic poem composed in ambiguous style. His masterly analysis of mystical experience in the form of lyrical poem is highly appreciated by many orientalis. R. A. Nicholson remarks in his book "Studies in Islamic Mysticism" that one of the deepest differences between Arabs and Persians in the extent and character of mystical poetry of each people. The prominent poet of Persian literature like *Rumi*, *Sa 'di*, *Hafiz* and *Ja 'mi* are witnessed enough. Their poetry is generally mystical in spirit and saturated with mystical ideas that it will never be more than half understood by those who read it literally. On the contrary, the poetry of *Ibn al-Farid* is intensely subjective in feelings and therefore lyrical in form. He presents only a series of brilliant impressions, full of life and colour, moments of life, description of natural phenomena etc. Thus, his poetry may be considered to be the secular ode and song of which this passion is the theme; and without knowing the clue to the intention of the poet, it may not be possible to know whether his beloved is human or divine. The chief characteristic of his odes is outwardly secular and inwardly mystical.

The wine ode (الخمريّة) is another important poem of his *Diwan*. This poem contains the description of the wine along with its qualities that effects in the mind of drinker. He symbolizes the intoxication of wine as Divine Love to measure the love of Sufi for almighty God. Apart from his personal experiences, he variegated the poem with colorful thinking revealed to him in the state of intoxication of love to God, his subtleties of Gnosticism, his ascetic practice, his yearning of soul and his state of union. As regards to his ecstasy that embellished in the poem, his son Sheikh *Kamal al-Din* Mohammed says, "Of well-proportioned frame, of calmly pleasing and somewhat ruddy countenance; and when he is in ecstasy when listening to devotional chants, his face would increase in beauty and radiance, and he respire, and the respiration dripped from

² Smith, Margaret: *al-Ghazzali, the Mystic*, p.107, al-Hijra Publishers, Lahor-1944

³ 1992, دار الالباب, بيروت, الاورد القادرية : عبد القادر جيلاني

⁴ Qadiri, Muhammad Riaz: *The Sultan of the Saints, Mystical Life and Teachings of Hazrat Shaikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani*, p.178

all his body until it ran under his feet into the ground".⁵

Al Suhrawardi and his mystic philosophy in Arabic poetry:

Shihab al-Din Yahya Ibn Habash Ibn Amirak, 'Abu al-Futuh al-Suhrawardi, al-Maqtool (1153-1191, A.D.) was born in the village of *suhraward* in north western Persia. He is commonly known as the master of illumination. He studied philosophy and law with *Majd al-Din al-Jili* in *Maraghab*. After completion of study he embarked on a long journey and met some eminent Sufi masters, under whom he learned Sufi practices and spiritual trainings. He was a renowned Sufi philosopher as well as Jurist and founder of a non- Aristotelian philosophical school, which is called philosophy of illumination. He wanted to unite the Persian (Zoroastrian) and Egyptian (hermetic) tradition and attempted to create a synthesis between philosophy and mysticism. The doctrine of *al-Ishrsq* is based on a spiritualist philosophy with a mystical knowledge.

Suhrawardi wrote near about 50 works within a short span of his life of 36 years. His works are consisting of philosophy, mystical manuals as well as poetry both in Arabic and Persian languages. His prose works are the main source of his poetry. He was equally interested in composing poetry, while exposing the philosophy of light. The major theme of his poetry is the light produced out of emotional love to God, which makes a bridge between the creator and creature. He also uses symbol of wine to express his state of union. His 'poem on soul' contains the metaphysical synergy and sublime thinking having a close affinity to the 'Light verse' of the Holy Qur'an.

Most of his poetry is mystico-philosophical rather than metaphysical and reasoning. His poetry is simple and spontaneous, arising out of personal emotion that touched his own philosophy having popular characteristic of universal demand due to the generalization of his personal experiences with other mystics. He advocated that love to God produces light in the heart of mystics which illuminates in mixing with the light of the lights and connects a bridge reaching to the Reality. Such connection is yet unspoken and may not be confined by language of tongue. Like *shibli*, he also asserted that disclosure of esoteric knowledge in improper place is lawful to shed his blood. His most famous ode, the *Haiya* (due to the rhyme ends with letter 'Ha') is written in the same tune. The poem contains all the charms of lyrical poetry of the highest order. The famous melody is sung by the followers of the *Suhrawardi* order in their assemblies of *dhikr*. A few verse of the poem is given below:

ابدا تحن اليكم الارواح و صالكم ريجانها و الراح
و قلوب اهل دادكم تشتاكم و اذا لذيت لقائكم ترتاح
و احسرتا للعاشقين تكلفوا ستر المحبة الهوي فضاح

The souls long for Thee perpetually.
Thy union is for them like basil and wine.
The lover's hearts yearn for Thee. Cheered they are, as they look forward to
Thy pleasing encounter.
Alas! For the lovers who tried to veil their love, while the passion is a
revealer of the secret.⁶

According to *Suhrawardi*, the celestial motion is regulated by means of illumination. Light of Lights is the prime cause to propagate the illumination to the human level by means of certain intermediary principles.

CONCLUSION:

Mystical philosophy in Islam has included all intellectual perspectives, which considered not only reason, but also the heart intellect. In fact, heart intellect is the main instrument for the gaining of true knowledge. Thus, Islamic philosophers were inclined towards mystical element in order to harmonize their philosophy with Divine Law. Arabic mystical poetry received a deep mystical colour in the hand of *Suhrawardi*, *Al ghazzali*, *Al farabi* etc. Their feelings are actually galvanized in the poetry and thereby enriched, the sense of Arabic mystical poetry a lot.

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