

Mysticism and Martyrdom: Connection between Two Cultures

written by Dr Mohammad Reza Sangari

1 – Mysticism and Heartfelt Knowledge

As a word, “Mysticism” means knowing, knowledge and awareness; but as an expression, “Mysticism” means the heartfelt knowledge that has been gained through “Kashf” [Discovering] and “Shohoud” [Intuition] (Not through discussing and reasoning). Some of the commentators define it as “Conscience Science” too.

As a matter of fact, “Mysticism” is a knowledge which its subject is to know God and the ways to reach to God. “True Mystics” believe that any person should behave mystically and observe mystic rules in order to become aware of “The Truth” [God] as much as his/her capacity. In other words, we can say that the mystic person intends to observe God all the time as Imam Ali [The first imam of Shiite people] has said.

“Baba Taher” [The famous Iranian poet] has said a poem including this concept:

“I see you when I look at the sea

I see you when I look at the desert

I see signs of your beautiful face where ever I look

Either at the mountain or at the land and desert”

[In this poem, by saying the Word “You”, the poet means “God”]

2 – Mysticism and Its Types

There are two types of “mysticism”. One of them is theoretical and the other is practical mysticism. The theoretical mysticism contains a set of knowledge regarding knowing God and his role in the world and the whole being as well as the relationship of human with God and also knowing divine aspects of human and stages of moving in the mystic way and the journey of human towards God and etc.

During the history, great mystic people have written hundreds of mystic books; but few of these books in the field of theoretical mysticism are taught as the main courses in “Hozeh Elmieh” of Ghom and other great religious schools [Hozeh Elmieh of Ghom is the most creditable religious school in Iran. It is considered as high education in religious fields]. As for some of these books; we can refer to the Book “Fosous –ol Hekam” written by “Ibn Arabi” with its commentary written by “Gheysari”, the Book “Tamhid –ol Ghava’ed” written by “Saa’eneddin Ibn Tarakeh” and “Mesbah Al Ons” written by “Ibn Fanari”.

Imam Khomeini, the Great Leader of Islamic Revolution has both studied these books and taught them. Besides, Imam Khomeini has written a commentary on “Fosous –ol Hekam”. Honoring “Ibn Arabi” in the letter that Imam Khomeini wrote to Gorbachev shows the respect of Imam Khomeini to “Ibn Arabi” and the theoretical mysticism.

But “Practical Mysticism” is said to the behavior and constant efforts of a “Salek” [The person who tries to become mystic and goes through the mystic way. This person is called follower too]. And it is obtained though lots of

praying and praising God and reaching to the position of forgetting oneself completely and thinking only to God.

Achieving to this type of mysticism has no way except apparent and inward movement in the mystic way following an experienced and knowledgeable spiritual leader.

And if we go through the history, there are very few people who have achieved high grades of mysticism.

As for outstanding faces of mysticism during the recent decades; we can refer to "Seyed Ali Ghazi", "Ayatollah Shah Abadi", "Allameh Tabatabayee", "Seyed Ahmad Ashtiani", "Agha Mirza Javad Agha Maleki Tabrizi" and ... We can observe the mystic way that they have passed through behind their words.

3 – The Islamic Sufism

When mysticism changed into one of the sciences of human, it was divided into different branches like many other prevailed sciences. And it found plurality in one way. "Sufism" is the most famous branch among different branches of "Mysticism". This mystic branch which is the basis many religious and non-religious movements is in fact a method of thinking and acting which its essence is formed by mysticism, worshipping God, praying and asceticism. But Sufism in Islam has been divided into hundreds of big and small branches. And every big branch has been usually divided into several small branches. That is why there are tens of Shiite Sufi branches and tens of Sunni Sufi branches.

As for the most important branches of them; we can refer to the followings: "Ghaderieh", "Naghshbandieh", "Chashtieh", "Kabrouyeh", "Ne'matollahi", "Nour Bakhshieh", "Heydarieh", "Molla Ghabieh" and "Baktashieh". And as for the famous leaders of the Sufi Sect whose names are mentioned in the history; we can refer to the followings: "Hassan Bassari", "Ebrahim Adham", "Fozayl Ayyaz", "Zolnoon Mesri", "Bayazid Bastami", "Jonayd Baghdadi", "Hossein Ibn Mansour Hallaj", "Abol Hassan Kharaghani", "Abou Saeed Abolkheyr", "Baba Taher Hamedani", "Khajeh Abdollah Ansari", "Sheykh Bahayee", "Eyn -ol Ghozat Hamedani", "Emam Mohammad Ghazzali", "Sheykh Najmedddin Kobra", "Sheykh Shahabeddin Sohrevardi", "Molana Jalaleddin Mohammad Molavi", "shah Ne'matollah Vali" and ... Many of critics of the Sufism have admired it because this mystic branch requires purifying soul and reaching to the deep and inward knowledge; but many of Sufi branches have faces shortages because of deviating from the main line. These shortages have caused superstitious customs and also making businesses for many charlatans who dressed up as the religious leaders for the Sufi followers.

As for this inattentive behaviors and attitudes; we can refer to inattention to the religion, religious rules, religious commands and duties and the "Resaleh" of "Elmieh" [Resaleh is said to the books that are written by high rank and very knowledgeable clergymen graduated from Hozeh Elmieh [Religious school]. These books contain religious rules and commands for every day life of a Muslim] as well as following these clergymen [Shiite Muslims should follow the rules that are written in a particular book. They actually consider these clergymen as the wise religious people who work out these rules out of the Holy Koran, tradition and behavior of the Islam Prophet and Imams.], not

fulfilling revolutionary and political duties with the excuse of being away from the world and earthly affairs and jobs.

4 – Martyrdom and Holiness

“Martyr Motahhari” had written an article under the title of “Martyrdom”. In parts of this article; he had written as follows: “Holiness of martyrdom is not merely because of being killed. In many cases people are just killed and it might be a shame for them instead of bringing pride for them.”

Martyr Motahhari had referred to the types of death and wrote as follows: “A death is called martyrdom that human welcomes it for the way of God and considering probable or certain dangers or merely because of a holy and humanitarian goal and as it is said in the Holy Koran: “In the way of God”. “ Motahhari believes that martyrdom has two main bases; one of them is having the objective of going in the way of God and having a holy goal. And man wants to sacrifice his/her life for his/her goal. And secondly, the person has stepped into this way with knowledge and awareness. Therefore, martyrdom is admirable and brings pride for the person and is considered as a heroic action because it is done based on awareness and the choice made by that person. And it is done in the way of a holy goal. Among different types of deaths, it is the only type of death that results in better and superior, holier, greater and more glorious life compare to the life in this world.

To prove this theory, Martyr Motahhari has referred to an explanation gave by Hazrat Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam. He has written: “Three people were killed. The first one was a person who participated in jihad [Fight in the way of God] with the whole his/her life and properties by the time he was killed in the battle with the enemy. Such a person is a martyr that has been tested by God and he will go to heaven. He is in the shadow of God’s throne. And only prophets of God are higher and better than this person due being prophet. The second person is a person who is afraid of his sins and participates in jihad in the way of God with the whole his properties and life. He fights with the enemy and is martyred. This martyrdom causes his sins to be forgiven; but it is the sword of fighting in the way of God that removes his sins. Such a person can enter the heaven from any of the gates that he likes. The third person is a hypocrite person who fights with the whole his life and properties and he/she faces with the enemy. And he/she is martyred at this situation. This person will be in fire; because the sword of jihad does not remove hypocrisy.”

5 – Mysticism and Martyrdom; Rooted in One Soil

Two subjects of “Mysticism” and “Martyrdom” have fundamental connection. As a matter of fact, “Martyrdom” can be considered as the same “Fana” [Fana means dying and means forgetting oneself completely and thinking just about God] in “Mysticism”. And the mystic people want to achieve to this position through mystic behaviors and ways; because “Fana” among the mystic people means becoming empty from all materialistic attributes and ugly humanitarian characteristics.

Is martyrdom some thing except leaving all earthly relations away? By having a look at martyrs’ wills or memories, we find out the fact that these people had left away all materialistic relations and properties like the great mystic people. They passed through a way during the eight years of sacred

defense that our great mystic people desired to go through that way by suffering a lot and tolerating lots of difficulties during all their lives. Martyrdom in the way of truth [God] is how ever a blessing that is not given to every person. This "Martyrdom" has defined as "Fana" in "Mysticism". And it is defined as "Martyrdom" in religious wars.

The interesting point lies where in both cases "Becoming eternal" has been emphasized. By mentioning "Fana"; the mystic people means forgetting oneself completely and unifying of the mystic person with the truth [God]. And this definition conforms to the descriptions given by the Islam prophet and imams and some verses of the Holy Koran about the status and position of "Martyr". Islam Prophet, imams and the Holy Koran have considered an eternal status for martyr they have called him/her as the eternal live.

