

The History of Islamic Contemplation and Culture

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The history of Islamic contemplation and culture has witnessed diverse conjunctions with different human knowledge especially the exotic reflections.

As we know, after the spread of the geographical domain of Islam, which were accompanied, with the attachment of various tribes and nations, different thoughts and reflections entered the domain of Islam. Amongst them were the thinking of Indian, Iranian and Greek philosophers and gnostics and the beliefs of Zorastrians, Jews and Christians. The transfer of Greek philosophical books into Arabic gave momentum to the above matter.

In the meanwhile, the Muslims who saw themselves as alien to the numerous thoughts and beliefs showed various reactions against these types of beliefs. These reactions can be summarized into three important pivots and inclinations:

A-Some of the Islamic scholars did not pay attention to these exotic elements since most of them did not consider as permissible, any kind of research and investigation in Ma'aref (gnostic knowledge) and beliefs; not even with regard to the divine works. They use to remain silent in front of the questions related to beliefs and believed in the literal meanings of Quran without any examination and analysis. They suggested this as the only way of solution.

The above tendency has been in vogue mostly among the Ahle Sunnat^[1] and one can count the Hanbalities and Ahle hadith as those following this view. The slogan of this group was "Asso'aal Bed'ah" i.e. asking questions about religious belief is heresy and forbidden. From among those who belonged to this group, one can name persons like Malik-bin Anas, Mohammad bin Idris, Shafa'ee, Sufyan Sun and in particular Ahmad bin Hanbal.

B-some others were showing a passive reaction before the alien thoughts. They form a more widely spectrum. Some, exhibited their reaction in the form of submission and acceptance and some others who enjoyed relative freedom and had the ability to do "Ijtehad" too by taking possession over the alien elements and adorning them over the foundations of religion gave entry to them in the head stock of Islamic culture.

Transfer and translation of the alien philosophical thoughts into Arabic language has passed three stages: Translation, interpretation and their appropriation and arrangement with the Islamic Ma'aref (gnostic knowledge) and establishment of new philosophical orders. The second and third centuries Hijri was the sparkling period for translation of philosophical books. Among the renowned translators, we can mention the names of Hussain bin Ishaq and his son

The third and fourth centuries can be reckoned as the period of acquisition and interpretation of the works of Greek and Alexandria laws which got started by people like Qavarri, Yuhabin Hailan, Abu Yahya Maruzi, Abu Bashar Mata bin Yunus and Abu Zakaria Yahya bin Adi. The third period started from third and fourth century and reached its perfection in the fifth century. One can name "Qandi" and "Faarabi" as the commencers of this period. The climax of this stage can be seen in the works of "Ibn Sina" and "Sahrvardi".

The recent stage has been a dominant one amongst the Muslim thinkers. The result was that the religious Ma'aref (gnostic Knowledge) got mixed with the non-religious elements in such manner that the system of beliefs enjoyed much lesser the required purity. In reality, these thinkers, directly and before coming in contact with the alien culture by referring to the inspiration and relection about them had not acquired a faithful and religious system.

By having one of the religious Ma'aref in hand (that too a confused one) they would encounter the non-religious belief, strive in comprehending them and occasionally would write their descriptions. Thereafter by taking and accepting them, they strived hard to coordinate these type of beliefs with the religions Ma'aref and give place to them in one rational system. It can be said that these thinkers, in the threshold of Islamic thoughts and by reaping the benefits of religious Ma'aref, have given dept and profundity to the human Ma'aref, Greek beliefs and other ancient schools of thoughts and have given new shape to them and presented them in the form of philosophical systems.

In this way, that which reaped the maximum benefit was the human philosophies which by getting nourishment from the Divine Ma'aref, their weaknesses and feebleness decreased and they got prepared for stepping into the field of sciences and knowledge. However, on the other hands the Divine Ma'aref sustained a real loss because gradually and gradually it lost its purity and its basic elements were forgotten. Anyhow the above course can be named as "the manner of composition and adaptation of divine and human Ma'aref" (gnostic knowledge) or "the manner of systems-making on the basis of combination."

C-Another tendency to which we shall now refer is the course which has been referred to by most of the theologians, (especially the holy theologians) jurisprudence and thinkers among the Shias and some parts of the Ma'aref too has been acted upon. But on the whole and in the form of one united system, it has been less exposed to public view.

This path is an analytical encounter with the religious authorities and the human view. In this course, the religious Ma'aref and the human belief will be examined discussed in three stages: Acquisition and explanation of religious world-view in the form of one united system and well

reasoned and on the basis of becoming learned in religious sources. The second stage is recognizing and interpreting the human world-views and the third stage is comparing the religious theologies with each of the human world-views and separating them from each other. The above course can be named as “the greatest Fiqh” and “the way of segregation in Islamic beliefs” or “the related discourse”, because on the one hand it engages in obtaining knowledge in the most basic religious matters and on the other hand it resorts to separating the religious Ma'aref from the non-religious one. In this method, talk is not about contravention and confutation, problems and answers, and correctness and incorrectness. Rather the discourse is in perceiving the Ma'aref and separating them from each other.

The author, by confessing to the paucity of means has in this research, applied the above method to the most fundamental and the highest form of religious Ma'aref i.e. recognizing the fundamentals of knowing God and this is a small step on a great path. Of course, in this research benefit has been derived from the views and confirmations of great Jurisprudents and exegetists too. On the whole, it is expected from the concerned thinkers and Islamic scholars that they do not withhold from their useful guidance and notification and help the author in reaping the benefits of their instructions.

2-Three is no doubts that till today various methods have been born culture and civilization. These methods, from the viewpoints of policy, principle and consequences possess common and contrast points. Therefore judging about a particular reflection does not necessarily embrace the other reflective systems. Rather it involves only their common points. However, without the least doubt, the Greek philosophy due to the influence, which it had on other school of thought possesses significance and importance such that it makes it distinct and superior from the others. Although other reflections before the Greek culture found its existence in other places like Iran, India and China, none of them had exerted influence on other civilizations and sects as Greece had done such that Greece has come to be known as the fountainhead of human views.

It is by favour of the above point that the importance of recognition and separation of “Greece and religion” will become clear. By Greece is meant the reflections of Greek philosophers. In particular Socrates, Plato and more so Aristotle.^[2] By religion is meant the divine religions i.e. the collective teaching which the Divine Prophet have presented on half of Almighty God to the people for their guidance like the religion of Islam, religion of Jews and Christians. In as much as the religion of Islam is the most perfect of all the religion of Islam is the most perfect of all the religions and the last amongst them and the Holy Quran has remained immune from the calamities of deviation, our emphasis is more so on Islam and our testimonies too are from

3-Undoubtedly the "Fitrat" (innate nature) or the natural "Ma'refat" (knowledge about God) is one of the fundamental structures of religious Ma'aref. However, regretfully in the past philosophical and theological discussions much attention has not been given, as was required.[3] In recent years too, while some have embarked upon that, oftenly we see that

among the reasons of proof of God, insufficient and weak reasons have been set forth. The claim to this is that "Fitrat" (innate nature) is a part of religious theological logic which along with the other parts, it collectively shows the true path of "knowing God" in the logic of divine religions. What this book has intended to prove is this that the Compassionate God has not abandoned the most basic matters related to belief and has not left it's affairs to the various Ma'arefs (gnostic knowledge) and to the human contradictions. Rather, right from the first step of search of religion, He has helped and shown the path. 4-it is necessary over here

to have a general outlook and a brief review over the discussions of this book. In the first section, while comparing briefly the "Usul" (principles) prevailing over the Greek reflection on the one side and the basic foundation of divine religions on the other side, we shall reach to this conclusion that the real differences of these two inclinations should be linked for in their roots and essence.

A deeper investigation will take us towards this direction that the real foundation and the corner-stone of differences of these two schools of thought (with regard to the Ma'refat of God) will return back to one basic and foremost principle and that principle is 'collateral proof' (not acceptable proof).[4] In the Greek reflection, the prevailing inclination is this that every knowledgeable matter has been manifested as mental complication and naturally the mind should undergo autopsy with the knife of logic and philosophy so that henceforth it is either approved or rejected.

The concept of God and proof of His existence too, like the other mental concepts is an unknown and irresolute affair which one has to achieve with mental laboring and after passing through various stages of examination and discussion. It is clear that except for some specific group of people and thinkers for all the others, this rational behaviour is forbidden and restricted. (Plato has emphasized this matter).

The principle of collateral proof in its turn relies on two other foundations; One is imagining God in the mechanism of abstraction and separation and the other is its confirmation with a definite method, which Aristotle was successful in explaining that for the first time. By making use of the matter of abstraction of collective concepts and the way of combining the concepts and jurisdictions he was able to explain the method of rational collateral proof.

In the first section this logical method will be evaluated and analyzed and in the second section the kind of its functioning in theologies and 'knowing God' will be revealed. In the second section the Greek philosophy and its theologies will be discussed in five stages. These stages are the period of fantasies, the beginning of philosophy, the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The real emphasis is on Plato and especially Aristotle and thus while examining the fundamental of their theologies we shall in contrast briefly refer to the religious fundamentals. On the other hand, the inclination towards the divine Prophets and the Ma'refat of God is mooted not as one rational affair and that too unknown and uncertain, but as one clear mysticism and Ma'refat in the heart and innate disposition of all the human beings. Thus if at times, this Ma'refat (knowledge about God) is not having the required divulgence and manifestation it is due to inattentiveness or human negligence and external hindrances and factors where the tarnished dust settles over the mirror of Fitrat (innate nature) and deprives man from its remembrance. Therefore the cornerstone of the upright religion consists of the norm of "innate definition".

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On this basis, the divine Prophets put into operation the innate Ma'refat through elegant methods. These methods were 'reminding' and notifying the very same Ma'refat. Therefore 'reminding' was the real path of the divine evangelists and is the second stage from the stages of divine theology (knowing God). However, in as much as man is the bearer of three-will and power and is in the position to express gratitude and submission before God or turn away and express obstinacy in front of the "reminders", so in the third stage of divine theologies the matter of "submission" is set forth.

In this way, the first stage from the stages of guidance and belief is given to man and he finds readiness and honor of entering in the next stage of journey to God and behaving on the path of bondage.

These three stages (definition, reminding and submission) form the logic and the real fundamentals of religious theology (knowing God) which will be discussed in order in the third .Chapter of this book

Notes:

[1]-We say this because the matter of deviation of the Akhbarit never manifested in the form of beliefs of the Hanbalites. Basically in the history of culture of Shias you will never come across a religious scholar who will reckon discussion of beliefs and its defense to be as heresy and or will adopt silence before the questions and doubts related to beliefs. The Akhbaris who in deducing the commandments (Ahkams) and the independent reasoning (Ijtehad) and its logic

were denying Ilm-e-Usul (Methodology), have themselves narrated traditions from Imams (a.s.) which consists of the most deepest form of Islamic Ma'aref (gnostic knowledge and beliefs).

Nevertheless, while coming across such traditions they never resorted to deriving independent reasoning, comparing or analyzing and for this reason they were close to the above tendency. (The matter of differences between Hanbalites and Akhbarit and the defects of these two schools of thoughts are out of the scope of our discussion).

[2]-From among the inclinations which we often come across in the study of Greek culture is the inclination towards "mysticism and intuition" and its necessities, among them being the belief in "unity and Existence" This aspect of Greek culture which reached its climax through 'Platonism' is out of scope of our discussion. But in continuation of this discussion we do intend to earmark a section regarding the comparison of the 'Greek mysticism' with the "religious Ma'aref" If opportunity is provide this Section too will be presented to the respected readers in the future.

[3]-Some of the exegetists, scholars of hadith, theologians and jurisprudents have since long ago presented useful discussions about innate Ma'refat (knowledge about God) under the concerned verses and traditions. However in the conventional philosophical and theological discussions of the past, this has either not been discussed at all or has not been seriously mooted.

[4]-We do not use the term of 'acceptable proof' from this account that in the logic of religion too it occupies a place and that position is argumentation and disputation. In the second stage of the third section of the book while setting forth the discussion, appropriate rationalization and notification has come in the discussion of argumentation and disputation and we shall discuss about the place, condition and form of argumentation and reasoning in religion. Basically, most of the religious Ma'aref are not built upon the philosophical, sensory or experimental satisfaction and it is due to this that the Philosophical and experimental sciences are not having the ability to reject and deny them. This is because such kind of Ma'aref are having a more deeply outlook than the human sciences. On the whole, the human sciences with its special methods has the ability to prove and approve the religious Ma'aref through different ways. In particular, one can make use of them as a matter of support to the religious Ma'aref in the position of "argumentation and .disputation" at the proportionate circumstances