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Decipherment of Occidental and Oriental Mysticism: A Comparative study of William Blake and Khawaja Ghulam Farid’s poetry

¹Neelam Butt, ²Mobeen Ahmed Khan, ³Dr. Najia Almas, ⁴Ikram Ullah

1. Lecture in English, Govt. College of Technology, Faisalabad Pakistan
neelambutt210@gmail.com
2. Lecturer of English, National Textile University, Faisalabad Pakistan
Email: ranamubeen29@gmail.com
3. Assistant Professor of English, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Quetta
Najia.almas@gmail.com
(Corresponding author)
4. EST English, School Education Department Punjab Pakistan

Abstract

This study converses the notion and discernment of mystic concept in the works William Blake as occidental poet and Khawaja Ghulam Farid as Oriental. Mysticism is considered the journey towards transcendentalism while unveiling the occult riddle of truth or wisdom. Experiences regarding mystic approaches are pondered as quirky for every individual. Yet we find, through our analysis that there is an obvious closeness amidst the proficiencies of spiritualists and this closeness is not bound of any race or ethnicity rather expanded to multiple social fabrics and religious beliefs. Regardless to born in diverse sections of the world they looked to share a divine kinship. William Blake’s work, yet mostly sacred in respect of imagery, is decisive in style and scope. However, in Sub continental Islamic mystic notion, Farid gives a context in which there is a vivid existence of blend of higher authority of the teaching of Holy Quran, metaphysical approach of kafees, the ragnees, secret of the “wahdat” and theoretical canons of Sufism. This paper through an in-depth analysis of the works of Blake and Farid concludes that both the poets showcased a versatile juxtaposition of occult jargon. It further uncovers their mastery of art and oeuvre that is unique in its kind which pushes off the socio-religious anxieties and chauvinistic affectations away.

Keywords: Mysticism, Sufism, Wahdat, Transcendentalism, Spirituality

Introduction

Mysticism being a confused notion and having multiple meanings for different people in different spheres are creates multiple meanings which create infinite connotations that further may cause confusion and distortion of the concept. It also causes denial of the topic and allegations. Mysticism is part of many religions. In most of the cases it talks about union with God and asceticism. It is indeed a common religious right to be in touch of God but in case of Christian belief, meaning of intimacy are different. Mysticism is considered a privileged contact with spiritual powers and affiliation with highly divine beings.

Though mysticism is a sense of elite contact with transcendent, but in Christian belief its not only the contact and ordinary teachings of super powers but it's an ecstatic and mandatory religious process within Christian community. Through this viewpoint mysticism frolicked a vibrant part in the preaching of early church. Heightening and enlargement of human consciousness through spirits was core genetics of the Early Christianity. It is clear from the Synoptic Gospels (e.g., Matthew 11:25–27) that Jesus was privileged with a elite contact with God. Prophets played a vital role in primeval Church; who were recipients of secret messages from God called revelations through Holy Spirit. However, divinization, according to Christianity can be achieve through meditative prayer, and particularly via the technique of Hesychasm (from *hesychia*, which means “stillness”), that was largely implemented by the Eastern shamans. The process contained in the deliberation of the mind on the celestial Existence, persuaded by the reiteration of the special prayer called the “Jesus-prayer” (which later formalized as “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God”). This practice terminated in the jubilant prophecy of the divine light through the divine energy to divinize the soul implicit in the name of Jesus.

The first few centuries CE of time of the Jesus is unanimously considered Early Christian mysticism. The New Testament was the main source behind multiple mystical experiences described from that time. These included as part of the proof of miraculous powers of Jesus and his adherents. There are number of passages in New Testament that proves as mystical. Also

there is a list of figures who utilized the New Testament to prove their selves as mystics. These early saints and martyrs directly received commands from angels and from God himself and have had visions about forthcoming. It was enough to prove them as mystics at that time.

According to the Book of Acts, the most influential and early figures of Christianity were John the Evangelist (also known as St. John the divine) and Saint Paul. The former was considered twelfth apostle of Jesus Christ and later was a renown historical figure; famous for his miraculous cure and conversion.

John the Evangelist

John brought up in a poor family. His father was a fisherman by profession. He was younger brother of famous apostle James. He has also written a volume of Fourth Gospel. Further in his legacy, there are three letters and a controversial Revelation to John that are the part of New Testament. Regardless of other three gospels, there was uniqueness of the gospel by John that contains multiple mystical references trough which believers can achieve a clear path to seek Godly miracles and occult powers.

I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17:20-21)

Saint Paul

Unlike John, Paul showcases two prominent features of mysticism. One is the realization of invisible life and other is a verdict that life actually has been united with God. Together these traits are under cover with an allied notion mystery. Shockingly, Paul uses the word mystery for 20 times in the New Testament however, all other uses 7 times in total that includes the most mysterious books ever written, Revelation and all the gospels. As far as the concern of etymology, the term mystery derived from Greek word mysterion that talks about something invisible, unveiled and occult. Paul's letters, in this regard, openly claims that all the hidden

truths and mysteries of God have been are suffused with this conviction that all the mysteries of God have been arranged up and divulged in Christ. Look at the example below:

To me, the very least of all the holy ones, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God who created all things (Ephesians 3:8-9).

This argues that Christ was the most privileged one who enjoyed all pleasures of hidden secrets by God. It also disputes that before him, God never disclosed these truths about his creation and mysteries except Christ.

In comparison, Islamic mysticism that can also be understand as Sufism, is a sacred notion of Godly attachment to attain occult knowledge and love with special reference to inner truth of divinity. Basically it a junction of sacred paths goes toward Godly powers and to know the nature of humanity and God as well as to attain the divine love and wisdom in the world. Islamic mysticism has different names among different regions. For example, in Arabic background it is called “tasawuf” which means “to dress in wool” but in Western languages since the early 19th century it is known as Sufism. The term Sufism extracted from the Arabic term for a “sufi” or mystic who further extracted from the tem “suf” or wool. Here it is also a reference from early Islamic ascetics who mostly use to wear woolen garments. In Persian, the Sufis are generally known as “darvish” which also means “faqir” in Arabic. Furthermore, it is commonly recognizable as “fakir” and “dervish” in English.

Islamic mysticism though in ancient times uprooted from numerous non-Islamic sources in Europe. Also there are strong proofs found in India. Currently, it seems that this movement stemmed from early Islamic asceticism because of the rapid increasing Muslim community and its counter reaction against the Christian mysticism. The only term mysticism was a foreign element but all the practices adopted by Muslim mystics were as per the earlier Islamic teachings. Sufis has played an important role in the formation of Muslim society. They educate the masses and highlight the spiritual concerns of the Islam among them. They also penetrate the Islamic genes into Muslims. The mystics carefully observed the divine laws and commands.

They never argue for the reason from spirits. The Sufis does not only obey the divine laws but they also have been carrying a responsibility as a large-scale missionary for entire world. Their target audience is humanity not any one religion. And this practice is still active. The central concern of the Sufis is the preaching of the holy image and life style of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). He was the founder of Islam and a great symbol of devotion. The Islamic mysticism thus largely peruses “sunnah” the acts and way of living of Prophet Muhammad. The Persian is considered as the first prominent language Sufis however, it also has strong allies i.e., Turkish, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi and Pashto. Mystical ideas spread widely among the Muslims through these languages and its related literatures. Poetry was the first genre in this regard. In few regions, these Sufis has also played a vital role in politics.

Rabiah Basri r.a

A prominent figure in history of mysticism from Basra (Iraq) was Rabi’ah’al Adawiyah. She transformed asceticism into mysticism. She was the pioneer of formulation of love of Allah (God) which promulgates only the true love of Allah regardless of the fear of hell of charm of heaven. These mystical trends by Rabi’ah traveled everywhere in Islamic world for decades. It often exchanges ideas with Christian anchorites. The concentration of Sufism in early generations was “tawakul” an absolute trust in God. In Iraq, a mystic school was established by al-Muhasibi, who believed that the sole value of asceticism is purgation of soul if one want to achieve the companionship with God. This school of mysticism focused on strict self-control and psychological insight.

Literature Review

According to Nasr and Leaman (1996) the concept of mysticism in Islamic point of view is conventionally connected with “Hikma”. It is both philosophy and wisdom simultaneously. This notion can easily be find out in Quran and all Islamic teachings are based on the doctrine of “Hikma”. Through the achievement of this one can find out straight way to God. Islamic philosophers and mystics often presented references of the holy verses of Quran for those who can recognize the emblematic and obscure meaning of them;

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth, the likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp, the lamp is a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil well-night would shine, even if no fire touched it; light upon lights; God guides to His light whom He will. And God strikes similitudes for man, and God has knowledge of everything. (Qu'ran 24:35)

It elucidates that God is the sole centre of the brightness of this universe. He is the only master of every creation. And he is the supreme architecture and unique craftsman with no example in this whole universe. It furthers that the creativity of God is not judgmental. Nobody can even think to produce a small feather of a fly but God. His sovereignty and art is transcendental. Furthermore, the light of wisdom created by Him only touches the selected ones who strive for it.

Since a numinous outlook, according to Mehdi (2021) all developments regarding philosophical and intellectual dynamics of mysticism have been done under the Islamic milieu. Therefore, it should be observed as rational lexes of the mystical elements in Islamic surroundings. Additionally, by nature, these elements are of two unconventional types in Islam. Virtually, Sufism propagates the arcane facet of Islam that is pure in form whereas, prominent features of Islamic mysticism were tentatively unified into the Islamic rational convention. Islamic spirituality, thus, positions on two stakes. First one is purely practical and the other is conceptual. It advocates that the obscure insight can be achieved through practical wisdom. This practical acumen consisted on inward refinement and self-denial. It works through a conceptual approach that is not restricted to conversational intellectual.

Analysis

A rigorous study of the context of English work written by Christian writers unveils how divinity has smelled English verse. Superfluous to draw attention, mysticism presented in English verse clearly motivate Christian stance. A deeper analysis of mysticism and an utter

métier of William Blake's enormous bustle need to retain a vivid position. We are almost agree on this point that Blake was a comprehended quixotic. In his childhood, Blake had visions about holy messengers. Amid this, he started offering his services as St. Catherine of Siena. Moreover, he decided to divulge his occult visions and showcased all the hidden encounters through paradoxical images. This made his poems incredible and double mystical which in bags a lot of significance. Blake's poetic work is considered a well-put-together panorama of poetic images. Blake had highly focused on Divine Love rather material love. As it is the only way to become valuable and adoring in front of God. A man who is adorable in front of God can never be deprived from paradise. In his famous poem The Lamb, Blake opposes that fondness is the archetypal attribute of together man and the Designer:

He is called by thy name,

For He calls himself a Lamb He is meek,

He is mild, He became a little child.

I a child, and thou a Lamb,

We are called by His name. (2008, p.9)

Furthermore, in the sonnet subtitled Auguries of Innocence an equivalent miniature in the cosmos state is vivid:

To see a world in a grain of sand,

And a Heaven in a wild flower,

Hold infinity I the palm of your hand,

And eternity in an hour. (Blake 2008, p.490)

This reasons an open commentary in favor of mystic approach adopted by Blake. Above mentioned lines are self-explanatory regarding mysticism. He is unanimously treated as respected among critics. One of the precious trait of Blake's poetry is articulateness and originality and rational tendencies in his works. He was eye witness of severe social change and

political upheavals in English society. At that British Colonialism and Imperialism was on its peak. The strata of America and Europe were also on the edge of change amid rapid Modern metamorphosis. Blake, in his school days had read lot of Latin and Greek work. He also acquired mastery in Bible and read the works of Milton. Beside these, art was also his interest.

According to Blake, poetry and art played a vital role in the formation of social reforms. The most effective period regarding this change was Romantic. It increased huge interest in the natural world. The clear agenda of the critics of this period was to promote awareness among different fabrics of society. In another poem by Blake entitled *The Echoing Green*, He showcased direct relationship between man and the God:

The sun does arise, And make happy the skies.

The merry bells ring, To welcome the spring.

The skylark and thrush, The birds of the bush,

Sing louder around, To the bells' cheerful sound,

While our sports shall be seen, On the echoing green. (2007, p.11)

This articulates that pursuance of quest and union with God consisted on various stages. These stages and their fabric depend on caliber of individual. Blake's pursuit however, based on ongoing process of cleansing of insight that highlight his focus on imagination and unity which ultimately paves the way towards, unity, redemption and reality. Different people observed this vision in various types. But mostly it is used for material and personal pleasure. Blake puts this idea as "single vision" which connects to the illumination, rationalism and objectivity.

Blake shares with one of his friends that if my eyes will see double vision of any object, there will always be a double vision in my mind. Focusing now on double vision, Blake steps back to the past and talks about denunciation of nature. He states that "This World is a World of Imagination & Vision...to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself"(134). It articulates that discernment of natural resources is the key difference between possessors of single vision and those who has dual vision. At another point, Blake debates that

“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing which stands in the way”(135). It claims that double vision does not let individual see prior to material. The ordinary man cannot maintain balance between divine and materialism. However, this double vision allows the individual to enjoy a new yoke of spirituality and materiality. Blake further highlights Jesus’ viewpoint that “I am not a God afar off, I am a brother & friend: / within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me”(136). It disputes that God is innate all over the natural sphere and within each individual. He is everywhere regardless of the chaotic contraries.

Unlike mystic poets William Blake is joyful mystic. For him, the morning stars sing together and splendor of life outweighs its shadows. There are no mournful regrets in Blake’s poetry, no sign for a day that is dead. Avil rouses his anger, not his tears. He accepts sorrow cheerfully as a necessary companion of joy:

“Joy and woe are woven fine A clothing for the soul desire; Under every grief and pine Runs a joy with silken twin It is right it should be so; Man was made for joy and woe.”

Blake’s mysticism was not an inspiration for the future; it was a realization of the present. The kingdom of Heaven is within our self. We have only to free ourselves from what is base and paltry, and live in this realm of spiritual beauty. The mind of Blake was abnormal, in a way, and he had a faculty for visions extraordinary. But the fact that we cannot share them does not discredit those visions. The outrageous, the concubine and the poet are of imagination altogether condensed, and to the mad man may be vouchsafed glimpses of awful realities, cannot co-relate all he observes, or clarify his cloud of imagery is another matter altogether. Blake thunders at Kings and priests and the representative rulers in his prophetic writings. Nor will he spare his own country when, he thinks, she has been false to freedom:

“But vain the sword and vain the bold, They never can work war’s overthrow, The hermit’s prayer, the widows tear Alone can free the world from fear.”

In comparison, Khawaja Ghulam Farid is a famous metaphysical poet and philosopher of Sub-Continent. He was born in the era of Mohy-ud-Din Ibn 'Arabi, (An Arabian Muslim scholar, poet and philosopher). Farid’s work and style dismantles the conventional poetic style of Mansur Hallaj and Bistami. It inclines to create a transcendental

assemblage. He introduces his own archetypal notion of mysticism predicted by the convention. He exhibits a cerebral religio-spiritual awareness of God, Man and The Universe. The dynamic proportions of his vision and thought resonate in entirety. His whole thought soaks in Existentialism. He occupied in the bastion of Orient metaphysics. Only being suffused in Western philosophy of divinity may not fully appreciate this amorphous metaphysics. He was bound to accept it as systematic approach. However, he rebutted everything unsystematic, arbitrary and un-methodical. But it establishes as the basic fault of present-day biosphere. While the ritual, on the other hand, does not compel such groupings. This facilitates to flourish a poetic mode of metaphysics to further pay a tribute to sacred ones. The mantras chronicled in his famous book named “Adi Granth” for illustration, is a unique in poetic custom. That’s why it succeeded to construct the Golden temple of metaphysics.

Khawajah Ghulam Farid's central focus is on transcendental unity of existentialism which means “Wahdat-ul Wajood”. He presented this idea in an exceptional way. Existence in its homogenous practice is based on metaphysical secret. No one can unveil this without achieving absolute command on spirituality. Nevertheless, when the achiever of absoluteness and self-manifestation topsy-turvy the world of conditional entities, it gives birth to the classified order of divinity.

The mystics are people of the heart. Hence they are the trustees of delicate feelings, subtle passions, occurrences and observations of the heart. It is so because a mystic “sufi” is the most sensitive element of this universe. Attachment to poetry and literature is his nature. It is for this reason that the mystics have composed poetry and liked the verses. However, their poetry is the poetry of higher human passions and values. Thus it is a fact that Islamic poetry, specially the Persian poetry was lifeless without mystical thoughts. The mystics adopted the poetry and in the poetry of Persian language the mysticism got a way into it.

The poetry of Khawajah Ghulam Farid is based on nature. In his poetry besides “Tasawwuf” and “Irfan” there is beautiful bind of taste, state, simplicity, penetration and influence. He had studied the poetry of his predecessors both of Persian and Urdu. In his poetry there is apparent impact of the poetry of mystical poets like Shah Abdul Latif Bhita'i, Sachchul

Sarmast. Bulhay Shah Qadiri, Shah Husayn Qadiri, Haydar 'Ali Multani, Maulwi Lutf 'Ali. However, his way of expression is modern and live. Among them he has adopted his own distinct and individual style. His mystical poetry comprises the following subjects:

Khawajah Ghulam Farid believes in the concept of “wahdatul-wujud” or “hama ‘ust”. In this belief he followed Ibn al-' Arabi and Mansur Hullaj. Thus in Fawa'id Faridiyyah he writes: "Allah, the Most High, is an Absolute Being and is the name of Wujud Mahd beyond inhisar and tashakkul. And the Absolute Being is present in all existents. Thus all existents as wujud are 'ayn bari and as ta'ayyun those are ghayr bari. Thus ghayriyyat is I'tibari. In fact, according to him “hama 'ust” is a single reality in the curtain of multiplicity of the external manifestations and the same is worthy of attention. He does not keep “hama 'ust” separate from the belief of “Tauhid” nor does being entangled in the truffle of multiplicity forget the Unity. Being acquainted with Arabic and Persian languages and a renowned scholar he propagated the philosophy of Ibn al-'Arabi in a forceful and reasonable manner. His manner and approach was distinct and full of grace and academic as compared to the style of Bulhay Shah Qadiri. For example he says:

Gumrahi sab zuhd 'ibadat shahid masti 'ayn 'ibadat jis ja kita 'ishq zahur

Nur haqiqi ghunghat khloay

'uth ga'ay ohlay bhaj pa'ay bholay har ja 'ayman har ja fur

fakhr jahan hik rit sujha'i 'arzi fhiya yak bar sama'i zulmat ban ga'i nuro nur

nit farid namaz shahudi

har shay amyn hay ramz wajudi sut mulwanay jo mazkur.

[All so called asceticism and service is going astray,

To remain in ecstasy in looking the Beloved is the guidance per se. At a place where true love, manifests itself.

The true Light has removed the veil,

The barriers disappeared and the simple people ran,

Everywhere is the valley of Ayman and everywhere is Mount Sina.

Fakhr Jahan has told a fact

The mortal has become heavenly for a while

The darkness has become light through and through.

O Farid! Intend to offer a prayer in devotion, There is indication of “wujud” in every thing

Throwaway the things mentioned by the so called learned.]

He in some of his kafees has presented the love as the highest reality. Like “hama 'ust” there is influence of Ibn al- 'Arabi in this concept. According to him gnosis is not possible without love. And it is the love that provides a man with real satisfaction and peace of mind. He says:

*sun samajh ray zahidjahid tun hun 'ishq day ayh kalimat 'ajab hay gal 'ajab hay
hal 'ajab
hay chal 'ajab hay ghat 'ajab
miththiyan akhkhian the barsat 'ajab har 'an 'ahad dun dhiyan dharo
hay bayshak din 'iman ayho
dil nal Farid da wa 'z suno
so bat di hay 'ik bat 'ajab*

[Listen to and understand thou, O ascetic! Now these wonderful words of love. The talk is wonderful, the state is wonderful, the walk is wonderful, the ambush is wonderful. The complaint of the wretched heart is wonderful,

The terrain of tearing falling from the closed eyes is wonderful. Every moment be fully attentive to the Only, the One, Undoubtedly, to do so is the Religion and the faith.

Listen to the sermon of Farid sincerely. This is one wonderful talk out of the hundred talks.

Music has also an important element of his poetry. Thus classical music and the tone and balance of local songs are present in his kafees and different ragnees.]

*Dilri harmal akhkhian bal bal
payrin chhal chhal chhalay
narmal dard andar day dermal
watray rog kushalay
jal bal tay halh mal mal kukan
Zakham pa'ay wanj zayray
dil nun luttia 'ishq maraylay
phir di shahr lay jangal baylay*

*matan Farid karay rab maylay
tangh aram wanjaya hay.*

In his poetry there is also a portrayal of natural environment and a successful picture of the passions of the masses. He is an expert in this field. He says:

*Uchchian lambian lal khajuran
tay pattar jinhan day saway
jis day nal parit asadi
o yar nazar na away
galiyan sakun sunj di disiyun
atay wehra khawan away
Ghulam farida uth ki wasnan
jithay yar nazar na away*

In consequences, the mystic poetry of Khawajah Ghulam Farid, on account of its subjects, elements and individual, his absorbing style, influences every stratum of masses. His mystical occurrences and the attraction and influential ecstasy of music, takes away with it every person irrespective of his being a minor or a major, literate or illiterate. It has its own distinctive and high rank. It can also be given a high rank among the Missionary poetry i.e. a poetry that teaches good human conduct. On account of it such poetry is termed as the trustee of the Inheritance of the Prophetic Wisdom.

Conclusion

An in-depth study of the works of William Blake and Khawaja Ghulam Farid divulges their poetic contributions regarding visionary approaches and amalgamate their matchless poetic art, craft and oeuvre. Another beauty of their style is to defer nationalistic affectations and cultural rigidities aside. Mysticism and transcendentalism is the core theme of their poetic works. Although, to define the relationship between Man and God is quite difficult however, both Blake and Farid masterly put it in a single thought and presented in front of apocalyptic world. This relationship of finite and infinite is universal. Every individual faces this chaos throughout his life and tries to solve this riddle of life i last breath. At one point Blake is of the view that

“whatever was divine in God should be divine in man”. It argues that after achieving the perfection, every secret of God should be vivid to man. He used immense symbolism to showcase this mysticism. These symbols clearly justifies that the there is a spiritual reality behind every minor object of this universe. This quality of Blake was amid visions he had seen during childhood. He was pretty acquainted with supernatural components. Regardless of the sacred imagery in poetry, his work is apocalyptic in panache and space. Blake’s central focus, in the context of Christian figures, is vision. Through open objects he has shown invisible, amorphous and irreversible. Farid’s mysticism however, focuses on the works and traditions of ancient Islamic figures i.e., saints and Sufis. There is immense spiritual kinship in their works regardless of being habitants of different regions. Consequently, it can be claim that both of these poets are from different lands but they share the same essence of mysticism in application of the mediums and expressions. Both the mystic poets envisioned about divine clairvoyance of a direct meditation of the Supernatural. They unanimously accepted the human soul and the world as production of divinity. Consequently, according to Samantaray (2010), their poetry can be called an “incantation which invokes the soul of silence incarnate in human language – the silence of the absolute meaning beyond the relative contingency of verbal events” (p.132). Doubtlessly, the principals and meanings of their poetry have no contradictions. Literature, In this regard, is the unique discipline which advocates and permits to put multiple feature of this world on a single platform. It promote multiplicity of narratives rather fixity of ideas. Through poetry we can see reality and fiction and confidence and uncertainty on a same page. It further gives a platform where debatable arguments can be built without personal prejudice.

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