



Extended Abstract

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A Comparative Study of “Death” in the Poetry of Rumi and Henry Vaughan Based on Mulla Sadra's Theory of Substantial Motion

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Introduction

One of the main concerns and of course the undeniable facts of human life is the issue of death. People always consider this phenomenon with anxiety and fear because human nature longs for immortality and avoids destruction and inexistence. The way of looking at this issue is also controversial because everyone looks at it from their own point of view. The issue of death is a common subject among all religions and they regard death as a window from the material world into the spiritual world. In materialism, death is the end of everything, but Islam and Christianity completely oppose this idea and believe in continuation of life in the other world. Many poets, mystics and philosophers have pondered a lot on this issue and tried to find a solution to deal with the issue of death. They solve the problem even before they actually face it, through a spiritual solution. Although some of these mystics may belong to different countries, languages and even times, there are similarities between their ideas and concepts. For example, similarities can be found between the opinions of Mulla Sadra, the 11th century Iranian philosopher, Rumi, the 7th century Iranian poet, and Henry Vaughan, the 17th century English Welsh poet.

Research method, Review of Literature and Purpose

So far, many researches have been conducted separately on the opinions and mystical beliefs of Rumi, Mulla Sadra and Henry Vaughan all over the world; however, no research has been done to deal directly with the similarities between the opinions of these three. In this regard, the present article has investigated and described the works of these mystics with a descriptive-analytical method and has succeeded in discovering the similarities of their beliefs. For these mystics the issue of death never means the end of the world; it is rather like a window to the perfect world and connection with the eternal essence of God. Even for a great philosopher like Avicenna, death has a material and physical aspect, and he considered death to be a disturbance in the balance of the body's temperaments which brings about the destruction of body and end of life. But the Iranian philosopher Mulla Sadra argues with his “substantial motion” philosophy that death is not the end of life and the mystic's soul is separated willingly from the body before the time of death because body is weak and inferior to him and cannot be accompanied by the soul.

Discussion

Mulla Sadra believes that there is no stagnation, stillness and consequently corruption in the essence of things because the world is constantly moving. He cites the Quranic verse in Naml Surah: “You consider

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mountains to be solid while they are moving”, to show that even mountains experience change every moment, so humans are not exempt from this rule. According to Mulla Sadra, all the creatures of the world are physical, imperfect and incomplete beings, and in order to complete their essence, they are looking towards perfection, which is the absolute perfection of God. According to this Muslim philosopher, the soul (spirit) makes the true identity of a person and the body is subject to it, like the current of wind that guides a ship; If the wind (soul) stops, the body also stops moving. The body changes but the essence of the soul remains constant. According to Mulla Sadra, death is not the end of life, but the result of the movement of the soul towards perfection. According to him, death is a kind of birth and it is of two types, mystical and sudden. He calls the kind of death whose goal is to separate from the material world mystic death, and he believes that in the path of perfection, human beings need to get rid of their weak body so that by breaking the bonds of ties, their soul can achieve independence and higher spiritual levels. He believes that only after leaving the material body, the path of the soul is paved towards higher levels. In sudden death, which occurs due to illness, for example, the connection between the body and the soul ends without any goal and no perfection is achieved.

Rumi has also addressed the issue of death in many of his poems and looks at it from the same perspective as Mulla Sadra does. For this mystical poet, death is a natural issue, and in fact, the desire of the soul to ignore this world and ascend to God, where the human soul goes beyond the angels to unite with its Creator. In many of his poems, Rumi calls for a favourite mystical death in the sense of separation from the world and drowning in the sea of divine love, so that by cutting the connection with worldly desires, he can face the issue of real and corporal death. From his point of view, whenever people melt in divine love, they have in fact become the true leaders of the world, who have no attachment to it.

Even though Henry Vaughan is a Christian, he has repeatedly requested to cut off the connection with the material world in order to focus more on his true and divine nature and to achieve God’s knowledge through self-scrutiny. For him, the world is like a dark night, and he aims to pass through it and connect with the Divine Essence.

Conclusion

The subject of death has long been considered by many poets, writers, philosophers and mystics in the world, because human beings naturally desire immortality. Some philosophers and poets of the world have similar views on this important issue, such as Rumi and Henry Vaughan. These two poets, who are both mystics, have raised the issue of death in their poems from their own mystical points of view. The remarkable point in the poetry of these two great poets is that, despite their religious differences, they do not consider death to be the end of life and the world, but see it as a window that transfers the soul to the stage of perfection and God. In their poems, they believe that the divine essence is revealed to man from behind the curtain of death; therefore, the mystic always wants a kind of premature death, which is possible by cutting off material ties. The poems of these two mystical poets are exactly in line with the theory of substantial motion by Mulla Sadra, who believes that the world is moving towards perfection regardless of its physical dimension, and death is not its final stage. According to his philosophical theories, soul progresses step by step until it reaches the point of perfection, which is the connection with the divine essence. He also believes that this connection does not necessarily happen after death, and in this world, through spiritual steps, one can connect one’s soul with God, and in this case, physical death is accepted more easily.

Key words: Death, Henry Vaughan, Mulla Sadra, Rumi, Sufism

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