

MAN IN SUHRAWARDI'S AND KRISHNAMURTI'S MYSTICISM

Mahdi Ghahreman*

Abstract: Identifying the nature of man is the main theme of Suhrawardi's wisdom and it is one of the most important elements in Krishnamurti's Mysticism. These two mystics have achieved common and distinctive features. Both believed that the real self-knowledge is the direct identification and the God as the main origin of human. They also believed that the man is an eternal and hedonistic one. They have common opinion concerning the principle of human variability and the prerequisites such the identification of self and freedom. The man's distinction in Suhrawardi and Krishna's beliefs lies in the fact that Suhrawardi believes in free human, while Krishan believes in compelled man. Suhrawardi evaluates the man's influence from the world by his real excellence, while Krishna believes that such effect only leads to social construction.

Keywords: Surawardi, Krishna, Anthropology, Self-Knowledge, Ego.

INTRODUCTION

Many philosophers, thinkers and mystics have made numerous attempts to identify the nature of man during different ages. The identification of man as the microcosm is raised in the philosophy of existence which is the main theme of macrocosm. As old as the thinkers' history of scientific thinking, who mentioned the time of discovering the man's nature, it is claimed that the topic of philosophy changed from "nature" to "man" during Socrates and Plato era. Most discussion aimed at the hidden reality of the man so that the philosophers used to provide their opinions in this regard in their books. This article aimed to extract the cognitive similarities and differences by two Islamic and Western mystics, Shahab al-Din Yahyaibn Habash Suhrawardi and Krishnamurti, concerning the man.

SUHRAWARDI'S ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology, as the frame of the man, is one of the most important topics of Eshraqi's wisdom and, in fact, forms the basis of this wisdom.

The Importance of Self-Examination and How to Achieve it

The importance of self-examination becomes apparent for Suhrawardi when he stated his opposite opinion concerning peripatetic theory about how to obtain knowledge (Suhrawardi, Collection of writings, 2001, V. 1, p 68). During his austerity, he runs into dream filled with light and joy (ibid, p 70). Peripatetics believed in possible obtaining of knowledge by integrating the ego and active mind. Rejecting the belief, Suhrawardi stated that integrating and mixing occurs between two items and objects

* Assistant Professor, Industrial University of Sahand, Tabriz, Iran. Email: mahdi_sut@yahoo.com

(ibid, p 68). Ego and mind are not physical objects, however. Suhrawardi, who follows his dreams in implications, states that he runs in to Aristotle in his dream and asked about the nature of science and how to obtain the knowledge. Aristotle responded that “refer to yourself.” (ibid, p 70). It means that self-knowledge, known as self-examination, is the key to understanding the science. Aristotle states his self-awareness method by perceiving the innate of man by the essence (ibid). This is known as “Physical Science” in Islamic Philosophy. Physical science, which will be explained, is not an acquired one by the innate (Ziaee, 2005, p 145). Yet, the science is acquired by the science itself without any interface. When the nature of self-awareness is explained in Eshraqi’s wisdom and the knowledge about an item equals the object itself, such equality guarantees the reality of science. Therefore, if any science is acquired in this way, it will be valuable. Hence, self-examination is the main element of Eshraqi’s science. The self which is raised in this wisdom is known as the “rational soul” in Islamic Philosophy including the Eshraqi.

Origin of Man’s Existence

Man is composed of two dimensions: sensual and physical in intellectual and religious insights, including Islamic vision. Sheikh Eshraq confirms this vision and believes that the nature of ego is an intellectual one penetrates in physical body (Suhrawardi, collection of writings, V. 3, p 134). On the one hand, Suhrawardi believes that the origin of man is valuable because the soul itself is valuable; on the other hand, he believes that the body is the source of darkness and distinguishes their differences. Another difference worth mentioning lies in the difference between two pronouns: “I” and “He” (ibid, p 23): I who perceives himself directly and He who is unaware of himself. In order to know the origin of two-dimensional man, we need to refer to the creations of Mashae and Suhrawardi. Suhrawardi believed in intellectuality in the world which consists of 10 intellectual creatures. A rational creature is wholly abstract of the matter. The issuance of minds is order beginning from the first and ending to the 10th. The first is sent by God directly and the rest are sent from each other. The last is “active mind” from which no mind is emitted. Soul is sent out from the last mind (Suhrawardi, collection of writings, V. 2, p 265). In his book, *Hekmat Al-Ashraq*, Suhrawardi believes that the sender of the human soul is platonic thoughts (ibid, pp 138-141). When the human’s taste, which used to the most complete taste compared to animals and plants and form the physical dimension of human being, reaches the moderation, it occurs by soul in the physical body (ibid). Therefore, Suhrawardi, in most of his philosophical writings, believes in the occurrence of soul in the physical body. He wrote that: “Human’ ego did not exist prior to the body because it is aware of its hidden modes, while unaware of hidden modes of others. Therefore, souls do not exist in unified form, otherwise everybody might know about everybody. This is, in fact, not true. As a result, it is concluded that soul does not exist prior to the body. The soul prior to entering the body cannot

be multiplied because it is not justifiable and they cannot be distinguished. The basis is that there is an indefinite number of souls so distinguishing is not possible due to the fact that they are not materials. Integration and multiplication of souls cannot be imagined, therefore, they cannot be accumulated in the body” (ibid, pp 201-202). Ego exists to evolve the physical body. If not so, its existence is useless (ibid). Although Suhrawardi believes in “old” ego in this philosophical writings (ibid, V. 3, pp 209-239) which is likely to be associated with the expression of realities regarding human soul, he supports the rational soul.

Human’s Sensual Features

Intrinsic Nature and Luminosity

Suhrawardi believes that man’s ego is intrinsic. Rational ego is the essence of human beings. Therefore, ego is intrinsic. In other words, Sheikh Eshraq believes in intrinsic nature for the soul. It is also a rich source of lightness. Therefore, what is sent is lightness. Concerning poverty, it was dark (ibid, V. 2, p 119 and 139). Inspiring from the Iranian wisdom and light human sensual nature, it is called “Modaber light” and “Esfahbodiyyeh Light” (ibid, p 201). Notably, what we mean by lightness of rational soul is not that it is similar to sun or candle because such light is not real inspired in the body (ibid, pp 110 and 117), while the soul is naturally light without physical aspect (ibid, p 111). In Eshraqi wisdom, whatever has light is apparent. Accordingly, apparent nature of soul can help its understanding and the nature is directly observed (ibid). Such perception leads to the physical science. “We would say that ego is alive itself and its perception is essential because it is alive. Therefore, your ego is your document independent from material (ibid, V. 3, pp 37 and 139).”

Soul Immortality

As it can be inferred from the soul immortality, it is based on rational and intelligible forms of immortality. Since it is immortal, it must somewhere it is immortal, too. Ego which investigates the perception of immortal rationality proves that the soul is immortal because if ego is physical and dividable, it must be divided which is against the soul immortality (ibid, p 126 and pp 24-25).

Soul Gratification

Suhrawardi believes that the rational soul is seeking gratification and defines it as follows: what is smooth with rational soul is enjoyable and what is against it is pain (ibid, p 432). He believes in two types of gratification: Spiritual and physical gratification (ibid, p 171, pp 434-435). Human ego is the manager of body and each manager is superior. Accordingly, if soul manages to find such relationship with

its hosting body and to overcome the sensual desires, then it will easily reach the spiritual and real gratification (ibid, p 171). In contrast, if the soul and ego is busy with the physical enjoyment and here the body is the manager, it will ignore the real gratification and become busy with physical enjoyment. Suhrawardi calls it the enjoyment of physical body worshiper (ibid). They will not realize the meaning of real enjoyment.

Soul Freedom

The problem of determinism and free will has always been around the Islamic thinkers as a result of the disputes over the topic. As most Jebraious and poets believe that the man is a forced creature, while others believe that human beings are free in their acts (Rabbani Golpaygani, 2010, 171-190). Islamic thinkers however believe in free creature. Suhrawardi also states that human beings are in the doubt to select the management of physical body and materialism or being influenced by materialism (Suhrawardi, collection of writings, V. 3, p 171). When the soul overcomes the physical body, it can promote to spiritual degrees even optional death. Suhrawardi believes that optional death is one of the paths to God (ibid, p 394).

Soul Survival and Immortality

Human's physical body accepts the ego by reaching to a balance. As long as the body maintains the balance, the soul interprets the body. As soon as the balance of the body is shaken, it leaves the body. Suhrawardi believes that man's soul is not destroyed after the death and continues to live in another world. To prove his opinion, he refers to Eshraqi's wisdom. In this wisdom, the ego is purely light and something which is light is eternally immortal without an end. Man's soul is in fact light and has an endless life. Therefore, no end is imagined for the human's soul (ibid, V. 2, pp 222-223 and V. 4, p 119).

Change in Soul

In Islamic government, changing the existence of an item is interpreted as its power, which means the materialism. When Sheikh Eshraq believes in rational soul, he states that "You had better know that soul does not change because of the presence of ego (ibid, V. 3 pp 179-180)." Since he believes in soul immortality, he refers to soul's excellence and perfection. The proof of the potential of soul can be easily understood from the causes mentioned by Suhrawardi. One of these reasons is the growth and excellence of soul. If the soul does not manage to grow and perfect, its existence is meaningless as soul growth is achieved by promotion to higher levels (ibid, V. 2, p 202). Based on inspiration of Mashae's wisdom, the intellects are the ground for mind activation: "The complementary is that the scientists call it "active mind" and religion call it "saints. The relationship between his mind and ours is

similar to that of the sun and our eyes. Sun affects ours because we are connected” (ibid, V. 3, p 180).

Conditions for Soul Actualization

- A. Release from the Physical Involvement: Sheikh Eshraq believes in an important and basic condition for the excellence and perfection of soul “the light is able to overcome the physical body when the encouragement to light is more in order to reach the source of light which is God (ibid, V. 2, p 223).” In the path of excellence, soul can overcome all obstacles and realize the real world and reaches excellence and perfection so that it gets close to the source of light.
- B. Self-Knowledge: When individuals get rid of material involvement, self-knowledge is possible through the natural perception. Such self-knowledge is the highest level of soul. Such people are known as “Brothers of Immortality (ibid, V. 1 p 73 and 103 and V. 2 pp 142-152). Natural evidence is the introduction to God’s spiritual wisdom. Sheikh Eshraq refers to a holy wisdom: “You had better know that knowing God superior to the identification of soul as Prophet Mohammad stated that” whoever knows himself can know the creator (ibid, V. 3 p 374).”
- C. Righteous Deeds: They make the identification of self and reaching to the source of light possible. The condition to perceive the God is righteous deed: “Righteous deeds are more important than science to the extent that they play a key role in understanding the God (ibid, p 396).” When the soul is aware of the path to reach the God, then it gets rid of sensual events and physically-involved issues by overcoming the ego. Here, the man selects the correct path in order to know the God (ibid, V. 1, p 464). As a result, it reaches the excellence. In his spiritual writings, Sheikh Eshraq talks about the trend of this path through the secret stories. He talks about the prison of the world (ibid, V. 2 pp 274-290 and V. 3 pp 208-290).

KRISHNAMURTI’S ANTHROPOLOGY

Krishnamurti’s Anthropology’s main basis is self-knowledge and its aim is to identify the identification of human’s reality.

Definition and Importance of Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge means the identification of the relationship between the self (not only the world of perceptions but also the nature and what we own) and the life, which means our relationship with everyone and everything (Krishnamurti, *First and Last Freedom*, 2007, p 115). Understanding self and self-knowledge are of great importance but such importance cannot be the basis of theories of scientists

and formulation of psychologists because I am trying to identify them and I can just realize what they say about me (Homou, talk with Krishnamurti, 1993, p 193).

The Origin of Man

Krishnamurti believes that the man is rooted in God and human beings are a part of God (Homou, *The Feather of Fly*, 2006, p 63). He also believes that self-knowledge is an introduction to realize and know the God and reality (Homou, *For Youth*, p 176).

Man's Feature from the Perspective of Krishnamurti

Gratification Seeking

Human beings are always looking for gratification including money, fame, prestige, and even worshiping, ideas, and beliefs. It is a driving engine for human beings, leading to winning in life. Our perception is even influenced by gratification (Homou, *Stillness and motion*, 2005, p 183).

Immortalized Nature

Most of us are looking for stability (Homou, *the Fly of Eagle*, p 54). Immortality and its principles were invented in India and Asia, meaning that he wants to say not to worry and there is immortality for the soul. However, it depends on thinking. Thought, belief, and immortality are essential for safety, hope, and health (Homou, talk with Krishnamurti, 1993, pp 100-101).

Man's Obligation

Some of the writings by Krishnamurti show that he believes that the man is a forced creature: "You are similar to knowledge, similar to the information in your heads; you are a gramophone which repeats whatever is written on. You are the sound of our society and culture; you are an untouched creature of sounds?" (Homou, *Description of Life*, 2005, p 99).

Man's Violence-Orientation

The fact is that human being is violence-oriented. If it is accepted by the man, then he becomes lazy as he is now. He has accepted the war as an accepted method and continues. Although there are thousands of religious, social, and other types of prohibition such as "do not murder", he continues killing even animals for food (Homou, *Eagle Fly*, pp 46-47). Human beings are violent and cruel (ibid, p 83).

The Necessity of Change in Human

Human's development seems essential and is of great importance so that it is the prerequisite to the development of societies. "Whatever was created was invented by human beings and co change is possible unless the man changes. The root of violence is human being. We want to make a change in the world; we want to have better organizations; we want to have better governments; and we would never say that we have created the world. If we do not develop, the world does not. After a million years of living, we have remained unchanged. We have not changed dramatically and we have always been looking for destruction (Homou, *Initiation and Performance*, 2005, p 77).

The Priority of Self-Change over other Changes

Krishnamurti states that: "Is the change essential in the bureaucratic world or social structure? Or a path is required from in to out through psychology? Where do we need to start to change this scientific world? If the world starts to change from outside world such as bloody revolutions, then human beings would change and become excellent. Communist Revolution and other revolutions said that if you provide the external order, internal order is automatically created. They also said that internal order is not important. What gains importance is external order: an idealist order and a utopia. That is why millions of people have been killed in wars. So, let's start from ourselves (Homou, *Eagle Fly*, p 79).

Conditions of Change by Krishna

- A. **Self-Knowledge:** The change in the world occurs in self because self is a part of the whole. Self-knowledge is essential for development. Change without self-knowledge is impossible. We need to know ourselves as we are not as we intend to know as ideal. Self-knowledge requires a creative mind because "what exists" is constantly changing (Homou, *First and Last Freedom*, 2007, p 52 and 53).
- B. **The Necessity of Change:** He believes that the feeling the need for change is the prerequisite for change, meaning that when the importance of change is not felt by individuals, they will not change unless they have reached a rational logic (Homou, *Life Description*, 2005, pp 174-177).
- C. **Feeling the Realities:** Krishna believes that feeling the reality is the main prerequisite for change (Homou, *Culture of learning and loving*, 2004, p 189). "Viewing lie as lie and right as right is change." (Homou, *First and Last Freedom*, 2007, p 357)
- D. **Freedom:** Krishna believes that freedom is essential for achieving the reality. "A free man from "self" is a complete creature with a continuous

and constant life because he seeks change. (Homou, Stillness and Motion, 2005, p 124).” Krishna believes that the life of a free man has strong basis. He has a constant life. He does not have to think about this continuity (ibid, p 122). The man prisoned in “self” is not correct and he is loyal to his own ideas and beliefs (ibid, p 124). Krishna has frequently emphasized that mind freedom is completely essential. He is talking about the soul freedom not physical freedom. Such freedom is achieved when the man is aware of his conditions including social, cultural, religious, economic, and physical conditions (Homou, Spiritual Pains, p 184). “One way of releasing from mind limitations is being unconditional (Homou, Eagle Fly). He has to uproot from the society and release from destructive interests (Homou, life description, 2005, p 107).

- E. **Love:** Love is the only factor to a significant change. Love is the true change; however, it is not an idea and theory (Homou, Creative Happiness, p 34). Love is not enjoyment. Most of people believe that love means sexual enjoyment or similar enjoyments. On the contrary, it is a holy feeling which needs to be touched, realized, and lived. This is a complete reaction and such reaction would cause dramatic revolution in mind (Homou, Violence and Creativity, pp 79-80).

Barriers to Change and Development

Krishna also talks about some barriers, created based on conflicts within human beings (Homou, Eagle Fly, pp 84-85). Gradual change (Homou, Violence and Creativity, p 75), fear (Homou, Eagle Fly, p 92), tendency to change, and efforts are for change (Homou, Life Description, 2005, p 174).

Similarities and Differences of Krishna’s and Suhrawardi’s Anthropology:

1. Suhrawardi’s and Krishna’s self-knowledge is the basis of their wisdom. This is direct knowledge and it is introductory to know the God.
2. In Suhrawardi’s self-knowledge, the cognition of the nature is the main topic, while Krishna believes in evaluating the relationship with the surrounding world.
3. Suhrawardi introduces the man as survived and immortal, while Krishna ignores the real immortality.
4. The principles of gratification-seeking and seeking change are the bases of both approaches. Suhrawardi, however, believes that the man is free. The process of change in Krishna’s approach leads to external society. In contrast, Suhrawardi believes in internal change to reach the God.
5. Human, influenced by the material world, is involved with free ignorance in Suhrawardi’s thought, while Krishna believes in forced man.

6. Uprooting the material world and righteous deeds are the prerequisite to reach the reality, while Krishna believes that human is involved with conditions.
7. Krishna believes in momentous change, while Suhrawardi thinks that it initiates from the self.

CONCLUSION

Suhrawardi and Krishna, two different scholars, have different attitudes towards the human being. Suhrawardi's mysterious wisdom is close to that of Eshraq. Therefore, he is able to discuss the origin and end of life (resurrection day) and draw the path to the God. Krishna, however, seeks the social man and does not talk about the origin and end of life. Krishna thinks of human world development and progress and does not pay attention to the excellence path and the influence of the world. Such ignorance breaks the basis of his wisdom.

References

- Collection of Eshraq's writings, The Introduction by Hany Carbon and others, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 4th ed., Vol. 2, 2001.
- Collection of Eshraq's writings, The Introduction by Seyed Hassan Nasr, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 4th ed., Vol. 3, 2001.
- Collection of Eshraq's writings, The Introduction by najafgholi Habibi, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 4th ed., Vol. 4, 2001.
- Creative Happiness, Trans: Mosafa, J. Marvi Press.
- Culture of Learning and Loving (2004), Trans: Azimi, P. Donyaye No Press, 1sted.
- Eagle Fly, Trans: Kabiri, G. Majid Press, 2nded.
- First and last Release (2007), Trans: Kabiri, G. Majid Press, 6thed.
- For Youth, Trans: Malek Zadeh, R. Mitra Press, 3rded.
- Krishnamurti, J. the beginning and end, Trans: Asefi, M., Sheida Press, 1st Ed. 2005.
- Life Description (2005), Trans: Mosafa, J. Ghatreh Press, 2nd Ed.
- Majlesi, M.B. Bahar Al-Anvar, Beirut, Lebanon.
- Rabbani Golpaygani, A., Comments on Religion, Trans: Suleimani Behbahani, A., Qom, Raed Press, 2010.
- Spiritual Pains, Trans: Azad, P. Hirmand Press, 2nd Ed.
- Stillness and Motion (2005), Trans: Mosafa, J. Ghatreh Press, 2nd Ed.
- Suhrawardi, S. (2001) The Collection of Eshraq's writings, The Introduction by Hany Carbon and others, Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 4th ed., Vol. 1.
- Talk with Krishnamurti (1993), Trans: Zahed, N., 1st Ed.
- Violence and Creativity, Trans: Azad, P. Hirmand Press, 3rd Ed.
- Ziaee, H. Wisdom in Suhrawardi's Thought (2005), Trans: Nourbakhsh, S.S., Tehran: Farzan Rouz Press

