

FROM OUR SOUL TO THE HORIZON
OF *SELF*: THE *SACRED PSYCHOLOGY*
OF SELF–AFFIRMATION THROUGH
SELF-ANNIHILATION IN HAZRAT ALI
HAJVERI’S *UNVEILING THE VEILED*

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to look at the two macro concepts of *affirmation* and *annihilation* with reference to Hazrat Ali Hajveri's *Unveiling the Veiled (Kashf ul Mahjub)*. The basic purpose of the research is to have a glimpse on the subject of *sacred psychology* in relation to the meaning of existence, inter connecting it to the journey of self-*affirmation* through self-*annihilation*. Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a.* unveils the mystery of human self while explicating the hierarchy of the universe, the function of man, his faculties and his qualities, his art and his final ends that is paralleled with his journey towards his own 'Self'. The *sacred psychology* unravels the cosmological order as defined like the separation, the distance and the meeting which is closely knitted to the 'Self' of human being. Hajveri *r.a.* has explained the various paradigms of the affirmation that is further presented by the perspective of the finite measure of 'nafs', 'negative attributes', 'negative entity', and to present the ways that how a human being should strip his sub human excrescences and the negation of the 'nafs' leading to the affirmation of 'Self', 'the affirmation of the soul', the positive attributes which will help a traveler to embark upon the journey towards the infinite, the Ultimate Reality. The central theme of the text of the *Unveiling the Veiled* is man and in present study, the chapter titled as *annihilation and affirmation* will be centralized. It will also consider the debates of various mystics with reference to the annihilation and the affirmation.

The Sacred Psychology

The *sacred Psychology* is a different term to define in the sense that researchers have been debating over the definition of psychology and its related disciplines. Sacred psychology explores the psyche of human being with reference to spirituality vis-à-vis human actions in the external world. The question of existence in spirit and form of human being is the part of sacred psychology where it deals with the journey of human “*Self*” towards the meaning of existence (affirmation) and to annihilate the negative attributes which are considered as the attributes of “*nafs*”. The meaning of existence and the connectivity of the soul are the important phenomena as far as cosmological order of the universe is concerned for the reason that if one person is disturbed in the micro circle of human structures, all the other connected souls get disturbed; and in one way or the other, we are all connected to each other, as said by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his famous essay *Over-Soul*:

Meanwhile within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul.¹

A travel from Finitude towards Infinity

Life is full of trials and tribulation and man has to make his way towards the infinity; for that matter, he has to go back to the state of that lifeless particle, that particle which existed in the deep intentions of Allah before the period of his existence. Since in the world of physics, a man travels from a lifeless particle towards the real state of Self in order to attain the nearness of Allah. The travel is actually from “the state of *Fana*” (nothingness) towards the “the state of *Baqa*” (becoming) which is called the affirmation of Self. This transition from one state to another involves two stages of life and two stages of death as confirmed in the Holy Quran: “They will say, our Lord, You gave us death twice and you gave us life twice. Now we confess our sins. So, is there any way to come out of here?”²

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَخْيَبْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ³

The transitional stage of the second death is the source of freedom for the soul, as ascribed by Rumi in his poetic work *Divan e Shams Tabrizi*:

روز مرگ چو تابوت من روان باشد
گمان مبر که مرا دل دریا جهان باشد
برای من مگری و گوی دروغ دروغ
بدم دیو در سینه افق دروغ آن باشد
جنازه ام چو گوی فراق فراق
مرا وصال و ملاقات آن زمان باشد
مرا بگور سپاری گوی وداع وداع
که گور پرده جمعیت جنان باشد
فرو شدن چو بیدیدی بر آمدن بنگر
غروب شمس و قمر را چرا زیان باشد
ترا غروب نماید ولی شروق بود
اُحد چو حبس نماید خلاص جان باشد⁴

When my heir moveth on the day of death,
Think not my heart in this world,
Do not weep for me and cry 'Woe, woe,
Thou will fall in the devil's snare, that is woe,
When thou seest my hearse, cry not, 'Parted, Parted',
Union and meeting are mine in that hour,
If thou commit me to the grave, say not 'Farewell, Farewell',
For the grave is a curtain hiding the communion of Paradise,
Why should setting be injurious to the sun and moon?
To thee it seems a setting, but 'tis a rising',
Tho' the vault seems a prison, 'tis the release of the soul.⁵

As mentioned earlier, the concept of *fana* and *baqa* has been explicated through this very *Ayat* of Quran: "They will say, 'Our Lord, You gave us death twice and You gave us life twice. Now we confess our sins. So, is there any way to come out of here?'"

These four stages of life and death can hence be summarized as follows:

1. The state of lifeless particle is called the dead state of man, considered to be as the first death of man.
2. The second death is when man achieves the physical state of death in this material world.
3. The first state of life is when we are born physically in this world.
4. The second state of life is that of the resurrection on the Day of Judgment.

Allah Almighty has given life twice, once of the physical world “*Alam e Fana*” (material and finite world) and then of the immortality “*Alam e Baqa*” (infinite world). Hence, the above mentioned are the four states granted by Allah Almighty to a human being. These are the significant states of man for the understanding of the “annihilation” and “affirmation” of the Self. There is a subtle point which needs to be clarified here that the annihilation is of human negative attributes of “Self” that leads a human being towards the affirmation of his own “Self”.

The Three paradigms of Fana (annihilation) and Baqa (affirmation)

The concept of affirmation in pure literary sense is built upon the following three paradigms:

The first parameter begins with annihilation and ends at annihilation but the medial way in between the beginning and the end is affirmation. The example of this kind of *Baqa* is that of this material world that neither existed before nor will exist once it comes to an end. This parameter of affirmation is flawed as pointed out by Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a.* in *Unveiling the Veiled* for the reason that the beginning and the ending is at the verge of annihilation without referring to the “affirmation of Self” that is the door way towards immortality.

The second parameter deals with the affirmation which is in fact not of primal order; in other words we can say that it came into being after its annihilation and the infinite sources thus created will never annihilate henceforth, for example, garden of Eden, hell, and the eternal world of the hereafter (akhirah), for the matter of fact that they have come into being from nothingness, even earlier than its state of becoming a lifeless particle. Their being can never be subjected to annihilation. Hazrat Ali Hajveri terms this kind of affirmation as a fiasco.

The third parameter is of immortal affirmation of Allah’s attributes and that of Allah himself, who has always been there. It means that He has existed since ever and continues to exist forever as in Quran:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ⁶

“He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He is All-Knowing about everything”.⁷

The attributes of the Ultimate Reality are eternal. He is Everlasting and His Being is the only “Supreme One”. This parameter has been considered to constitute the truthful framework for the eventual manifestation of the affirmation of a believer’s “Self”. In this way, the traveler of Allah’s path can affirm his attributes which have been shaped up on the pattern of Allah’s attributes that are breathed into his Soul at the hour of creation. The concept of *Baqa* can be centralized at the demonstration of such attributes. A mystic says: My sign and my station in this journey towards *Baqa* have been annihilated and I don’t see the beginning and the end but I have annihilated “my” own “Self” irrespective of “*qurb o ban’at*” (in close proximity with the Divine and at a distance), and got the destination of the eternal Truth and the infinity has been dawned upon me with clear horizon.⁸ Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a.* further explains it explicitly in the context of *Baqa*: Hence, they have even annihilated the utmost desire of annihilation and have submitted themselves to the Will of Allah with their free will.⁹ Therefore, this kind of annihilation of desire will lead a traveler towards the total annihilation while his desire exists only with the Ultimate Will and with the Love of the Ever Exalting Allah. The concepts of *fana* and *baqa* resonate with each other as the *ẓahir* and *batin* operate at the parallel streams in spirituality. Quran says in the account of the affirmative state of *Baqa* in the hereafter :

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَثَرًا¹⁰

While the hereafter is much better and much more durable.¹¹

The cosmology of human “Self” in Divine Spectrum

The question arises about the recognition of the positive attributes of “Self” in the spectrum of divinity within the cosmological order of the Ultimate. The intellect, in spirituality, is considered as a characteristic of “Self”, “Soul”, as Quran affirms the efficacy of both in recognizing and understanding signs of Allah :

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ¹²

We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves.¹³

It can thus be said that the whole fabric of the universe is woven out of Eternity and Ephemerality, Infinitude and Finitude, Absolute and Relativity; in the same pattern, the same rule is applicable for the pair of annihilation and affirmation while representing it with the pair of “*nafs*” and “*roob*”. There is a difference between reality and

illusion as Allah has created the symbols for reality (e.g. water) and illusion (e.g. foam) in the following parable :

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا ۚ وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حُلِيٍّ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقِّ وَالْبَاطِلِ ۚ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۗ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ۗ¹⁵

He sent down water from the heavens so the canals flowed according to their capacity, and the flood carried bulging scum. And a similar scum comes up from what they melt in the fire to obtain ornaments or other objects. This is how Allah depicts the truth and untruth. As for the scum, it goes to be thrown away, while that which benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah brings out the parables.¹⁵

Following the essence of this parable, man in his sacred journey towards the affirmation of the self has to unveil the veils of illusion from the reality, the scum from water, the covers of untruth from truth, and thus, he has to remove the veils of annihilation from the state of affirmation; yet, in general, man knows a little about illusion and remains ignorant of reality, as confirms Quran: “They know something superficial of the worldly life, but of the hereafter they are negligent”.¹⁶

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ¹⁷

Water here is the symbol of Truth, ‘subjectivized’ and water can be called as ‘drink of drinks’ for the matter of fact whatever the drink may be, water is always its foundation. Muhayudin Ibn Arabi in his book *An ocean without shore* has elaborated this very concept of illusion and reality. He reflects that Allah has created man in His own image by using the symbol of mirror, the Hadith also validates it: “Man is a mirror wherein appears the inverse reflection of truth, of Divine Reality, that which is *Batin* (hidden) in God is *Zahir* (apparent) in man.¹⁸ This is also connected to the universal theme of the Fall, where apparently it appears to be the Fall of the Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) representing his exile from the holy garden of Eden but in *batin* (hidden) it’s the path way towards the destined state of *Baqa*, the affirmation of Self, through the sacred psychology of “Self” atoned with the Tree of *Immortality*. The Quranic account of the Fall unveils the first step of the sacred journey of man :

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى¹⁹

“When the Satan instigated him, He said, “Adam, Shall I guide you to the tree of eternity and to an empire that does not decay?”²⁰

This, in reality, is the beginning of the journey towards the affirmation of “Self”, from “*Alam e fana*” (annihilation) to “*Alam e baqa*” (affirmation). The moment we open our eyes in the physical world, we are in veils layer upon layer: These veils are uplifted one by one through the annihilation of the negative attributes while taking a believer to the Divine communion in the world of Immortality.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the idea of affirmation with reference to Hazrat Ali Hajveri’s *Unveiling the Veiled* unveils the sacred psychology of “Self” and unfolds the divine cosmological order of the universe which is in the rhythm with the “Self”. The order provides the sustenance for the “Self” since the idea of the perfection of the “Self” is at the core of the text. According to the contextual exegesis of Hadith, Allah has created man in *His* own image, which is the primary source for the affirmation of the “Self”. Self is the reflector of Allah’s image; therefore, it has to be transparent in itself (*Al insan Al Kamil*). This transparent Self unveils the reality of the *Baqa* as explained by Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a.* in *Unveiling the Veiled*.

Landing in Immortality

While we may decode the perspective of *Baqa* in the sense that the third parameter presented by Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a.* unveils the reality of *Baqa*, here also arises a question over another aspect of *Baqa* that in the pair of *qurb o ban’d* (close proximity and distance) we see that *Baqa* is of two kinds: the first kind is the *baqa e qurb* for the believer while the second one is the *baqa e ban’d* for the non believer: whereas this can further be confirmed from this significant verse from Quranic angle that this pair of *Baqa* is inevitable for the believer and the non-believer:

قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا أَوْ خَلْقًا مِمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ۚ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا ۗ قُلِ
الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هُوَ ۗ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ
قَرِيبًا^{٢١}

Say, “Be you stones or iron, or any creation you deem harder in your hearts.” Thereupon they will ask, “Who will bring us back?” Say “The One who created you for the first time.” So, they will shake their heads before you and say “When shall that be?” Say, “May be, it²² is near.”²³

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ <http://www.emersoncentral.com/oversoul.htm>
- ² Al Quran, Surah 40, *Ghafir*, Ayat 11. English Translation: Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ³ Al Quran, Surah 40, *Ghafir*, Ayat 11.
- ⁴ Rumi. *Divan e Shams Tabrizi*. English Translation: Reynold Nicholson. Kashmir India. Gulshan Books Publisher. 2015. p. 94.
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 95.
- ⁶ Al Quran, Surah 57. *Al-Hadeed*. Ayat 3.
- ⁷ Al Quran, Surah 57. *Al-Hadeed*. Ayat 3, English Translation Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ⁸ Hazrat Ali Hajveri *r.a. Kashf ul Mahjoob* (Unveiling the Veiled). Urdu Translation "Bayan ul Matloob" by Maulvi Feroz ud din, Lahore, FerozeSons. 2003. 7th edition, 2015. Pp. 228-229.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Al Quran, Surah 87. *Al-A'la*. Ayat 17.
- ¹¹ Al Quran, Surah 87. *Al-A'la*. Ayat 17. English Translation: Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ¹² Al Quran, Surah 41. *Fussilat*. Ayah 53.
- ¹³ Al Quran, Surah 51 *Ad-Dhariyat* Ayah 20-21. English Translation Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ¹⁴ Al Quran, Surah 13. *Ar-Ra'd*. Ayah 17.
- ¹⁵ Al Quran, Surah 13. *Ar-Ra'd*. Ayah 17. English Translation: Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ¹⁶ Al Quran, Surah 30 *Al-Rum* Ayat 7 English Translation Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ¹⁷ Al Quran, Surah 30 *Al-Rum* Ayat 7.
- ¹⁸ Michel Chodkiewicz. *An Ocean without Shore*. Lahore, Suhail Acadmey. 2001. P.37
- ¹⁹ Al Quran, Surah 20 *Taba* 120.
- ²⁰ Al Quran, Surah 20 *Taba* 120 English Translation Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.
- ²¹ Al Quran, Surah 17 *Al-Isra* Ayat 50-51
- ²² It, refers to the state of *Baqa*, immortality of the believer
- ²³ Al Quran, Surah 17 *Al-Isra* Ayat 50-51 English Translation Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani.