



Research Article

Spiritual Birth: Exploring the Concept of 'Death before Death' in Mirza Khan Ansari's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

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The influence of theosophical and mystical principles permeates the poetry of the Rokhani Period, extending beyond its initial literary manifestation to subsequent poetic schools. This study delves into the concept of "death before death" within selected works of the esteemed poet Mirza Khan Ansari from the Rokhani Period. Referred to as "spiritual birth" in philosophy and "TAWALUD-E-MANAWI" in Farsi Dari, this theory is notably prevalent in Ansari's poetry. Central to Muslim belief is the anticipation of doomsday, underpinned by a commitment to truthfulness and righteousness. The imperative of preparing for death, abstaining from wrongdoing, aiding fellow beings, upholding the rights of Allah, and numerous other tenets all encapsulate the essence of "death before death." Thus, this research underscores the significance and urgency of exploring this theme. Through a meticulous examination conducted primarily in library settings, this paper elucidates how Mirza Khan's poetry embodies the theory of spiritual birth. It advocates for the prioritization of spiritual over physical birth and emphasizes the necessity of preparing for death as a transformative process. Employing descriptive and analytical methodologies, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between mortality and spirituality.

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Introduction

In the pomes of Mirza Khan from the Rokhani Period, the theory of theosophy and mysticism are seen wherein an important subject is spiritual birth, this theory is also called (death before death). Humans do not have power over their physical birth, but they do have power over their spiritual birth. Avoiding all the vice and bad deeds is called spiritual birth. Human's first death is called physical death, however, when a human receives the privilege of spiritual death before the corporal death, it is called (death before death) in theosophy or is called second (Spiritual) birth after the first (corporal) birth. This is mentioned a lot in theosophy that a human should achieve the degree of perfection, be a good human, do good and avoid doing bad deeds and should consider the rights of Allah and humans. By doing so creating a connection with Allah can be done with spiritual birth, such examples can be found in the poems of Sufis and theosophists.

In many aspects of life, it's common for individuals to acknowledge certain truths intellectually without fully embodying them in their actions. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced when it comes to the belief in death among Muslims. While the concept of death is ingrained in their faith, many fail to adequately prepare for it. Despite recognizing that Almighty Allah has bestowed upon them the purpose of being virtuous humans

and devout Muslims, a significant portion of individuals neither strive to embody goodness nor adhere to the teachings of Islam.

This discrepancy between belief and action underscores the heightened emphasis on spiritual birth within Sufism, where the focus shifts from mere physical existence to intentional spiritual growth. The concept of spiritual birth, or "death before death," underscores the notion that humans possess agency in achieving a state of spiritual enlightenment prior to their physical demise. It calls for a profound transformation in which individuals consciously strive to transcend the trappings of worldly desires and embrace a life characterized by righteousness and devotion to Allah.

Indeed, the essence of spiritual birth lies in the cultivation of a deep and meaningful connection with the divine. By prioritizing spiritual growth and purifying the soul from the shackles of vice and wrongdoing, individuals pave the way for a profound communion with Almighty Allah. This spiritual journey serves as a means to attain higher levels of consciousness and enlightenment, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the purpose of life and the inevitability of death.

The theory of "death before death" and the concept of spiritual birth converge in their shared objective: to facilitate a profound transformation in individuals' spiritual journey. It emphasizes the importance of transcending mere physical

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existence and instead striving for a spiritual awakening that enables a meaningful connection with the divine. In essence, achieving spiritual birth or "death before death" serves as a transformative catalyst for those seeking spiritual fulfillment and a deeper understanding of their existence.

Through this research, we aim to shed light on the significance of spiritual birth and the theory of "death before death" within the context of Islamic spirituality. By exploring the implications of these concepts on individuals' beliefs and actions, we hope to provide insights that inspire meaningful introspection and spiritual growth among believers.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing a hermeneutic approach to analyze the selected couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari within the context of the theory of "death before death" and its correlation with spiritual birth.

Data Collection

The primary data for this study consist of the selected couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari's poetry, focusing specifically on verses that allude to or embody the concept of "death before death" and spiritual birth. These couplets will be sourced from authoritative editions of Mirza Khan's collected works, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of the textual data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves a meticulous examination of the selected couplets to identify themes, motifs, and linguistic nuances relevant to the theory of "death before death" and its relationship with spiritual birth. A hermeneutic approach will be employed, which entails a deep interpretative engagement with the text to uncover layers of meaning and significance.

Research Procedures

Selection of Couplets: A systematic process will be employed to select relevant couplets from Mirza Khan Ansari's poetry, focusing on verses that explicitly or implicitly address the theory of "death before death" and spiritual birth.

Coding and Categorization: The selected couplets will be coded and categorized based on thematic content and linguistic elements, facilitating the organization and analysis of the textual data.

Interpretation and Analysis: The coded couplets will be subjected to in-depth interpretation and analysis, guided by the research questions and theoretical framework. Themes and patterns emerging from the data will be identified and examined to elucidate the relationship between "death before death" and spiritual birth as depicted in Mirza Khan's poetry.

Validation: To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the textual analysis will be cross-validated through peer review and consultation with experts in the field of literature and mysticism.

Objectives of the Study:

- The primary objectives of this research are as follows:
- To examine the concept of "death before death" as portrayed in the selected couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari.
- To investigate the correlation between the theory of "death before death" and the notion of spiritual birth as depicted in the chosen couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari.

Research Questions:

- The research endeavors to address the following questions:

- What the underlying theory of "death before death" is as elucidated in the selected couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari?
- How does the theory of "death before death" depicted in the chosen couplets of Mirza Khan Ansari relate to the concept of spiritual birth?

Historical Background

The essence of human existence is rooted in the pursuit of the hereafter world. Central to achieving success in this realm are two pivotal considerations: the fulfillment of the rights of Allah and the rights of fellow beings (Smith, 2010). To become a truly successful Muslim in both worlds, one must undergo a dual birth - the physical birth and the intentional attainment of spiritual birth before the inevitable physical death (Ahmad, 2015). This intentional pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, often referred to as "death before death," encapsulates the essence of spiritual birth (Khan, 2018). For a Muslim to excel in both realms, it becomes imperative to embrace spiritual birth alongside physical birth and to consciously embark on a journey of spiritual transformation culminating in spiritual death before physical demise (Iqbal, 2003). In Sufism, adherence to this path is believed to pave the way for success in both worldly and spiritual domains (Rumi, 1207).

Thus, the significance and urgency of exploring this subject are underscored. Only a few and marginal points have been discussed in Mohammad Akbar's work, ("The Vision of Mystical and Philosophical World of Mirza Khan," Akbar, 2012), ("The Eastern Philosophy of Bayezed Rokhan," Akbar, 2014), and many other works of the author about this subject. However, the title, content, objectives, questions, and achievements of this research paper vary from other works. In the literature of Farsi Dari, there are many academic international research papers that research the spiritual birth in the poems of Maulana Balkhi and many other poets. In fact, the thought and theory of this research is taken from these articles, however, the theory of "death before death" is not researched in these articles. Only spiritual birth has been discussed in their poems. It is worth mentioning that this work is different from previous works in every aspect.

There are also discussions in "Literature and Philosophy" about it, however, the theory of this research ("death before death") is completely different from the content of this book, so in conclusion, we can say that this work is different from the previous ones and there are only some leads of this subject.

Exploring the Theory of Spiritual Birth

Rokhanis' mystical and theosophical poems have philosophical underpinnings, particularly in their discussions about knowing God and self. To delve deeper into this concept, we turn to the works of Mirza Khan Ansari, specifically analyzing a selection of his poems as exemplars. The discourse on spiritual birth is best understood through both verbal articulation and written expression, as it necessitates practical experience—an exploration of the inner workings of the human psyche and soul. Spiritual birth, as conceptualized in Sufism and theosophy, represents a transcendent awakening—an intentional rebirth that surpasses mere physical existence. While every individual possesses the potential for such a profound transformation, it is not readily accessible to all. This intentional birth supersedes the limitations of corporeal existence, offering a transformative journey toward spiritual enlightenment (Fazeli, 1998).

In this spiritual journey, the notion of death takes on a nuanced significance. Unlike the compulsory and involuntary nature of physical death, intentional death—a precursor to spiritual birth—requires a conscious surrendering of one's ego and attachments. This metaphorical death paves the way for a profound spiritual awakening, marking the onset of a new, enlightened existence (Ahmad, 2015).

Human existence is characterized by duality—a coexistence within both the material and spiritual realms. While the material realm encompasses the mundane aspects of human life—nurturance, play, reproduction, and primal instincts—the spiritual realm transcends these confines, offering a pathway to higher understanding and enlightenment. Thus, humans inherently straddle two worlds, navigating the complexities of both materiality and spirituality (Elmi, 2016).

In various spiritual traditions, including Sufism, mysticism, and philosophical discourse, the dichotomy between the external and internal facets of human existence is a recurring theme. This dual nature finds expression in the intricate interplay between heart and soul—a quest for transcendence that transcends the limitations of physicality. Scholars such as Ibn Arabi and Plato have delved into the depths of human consciousness, underscoring the importance of inner transformation in the pursuit of ultimate truth and knowledge (Hashemi, 2020).

The theory of spiritual birth intricately intertwines with the inner workings of the human psyche—a profound metamorphosis that heralds a new chapter in one's spiritual journey. As the inner system undergoes a transformative shift, individuals embark on a path of self-discovery and enlightenment, transcending the confines of earthly existence (Majid, 2011, p. 80).

In the view of the mystics, human beings live three types of lives, have three types of death, and face three types of doomsdays. In the realm of existence, humans traverse three distinct lives, each with its own unique characteristics and implications. The first is the natural life, also known as inherent life, bestowed upon all individuals indiscriminately. In this domain, all humans share equality, as they are endowed with the same foundational existence. However, beyond this innate life, lies the realm of corporal birth—a birth determined by parental lineage and the amalgamation of chromosomes. Through this form of birth, individuals enter into the world, with the father's role pivotal in determining the gender of offspring, a privilege bestowed upon him by the Almighty Creator (Ahmad, 2015).

Alongside corporal birth exists another dimension—the realm of intentional and spiritual death. In this realm, individuals consciously strive to avoid sinful acts and vices, thereby undergoing a symbolic death to worldly desires. This intentional death signifies a transcendence beyond mere physical existence, a spiritual awakening marked by the rejection of immoral deeds (Hashemi, 2022).

The third life unfolds after corporal death—a transition into the eternal realm of the hereafter. This stage represents the culmination of human existence, where the consequences of one's actions in the earthly realm manifest in the afterlife. While natural death, ordained by the Almighty Creator, lies beyond human control, the journey towards spiritual death—marked by the avoidance of vice and immorality—is a conscious endeavor within human agency (Elmi, 2016).

It is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitations of human agency in the face of unintentional and natural death. Despite the lack of control over these inevitable occurrences, such deprivation of power serves as a testament to the divine order, wherein predetermined destiny unfolds for the ultimate benefit of humankind. From the selection of gender to the sustenance received and the trials endured, humans grapple with forces beyond their control, each aspect intricately woven into the fabric of destiny (Fazeli, 1998).

Indeed, the journey of spiritual birth finds its roots in the trials and tribulations of corporal existence. Without the transformative experience of spiritual rebirth, the significance of corporal birth diminishes, rendering it devoid of true value. For it is through the cultivation of human virtues and the transcendence

of worldly desires that individuals truly embody the essence of humanity, transcending the constraints of mere physicality to embrace the eternal realm of the spirit (Majid, 2011, p. 62).

چہ فانی بی خیل صفات کر
دوبارہ بی خان حیات کر

(Ansar, 1970, P. 118)

It is discussed in the spiritual birth that human beings should quit bad human manners and have good human manners in themselves. When a human quits bad human manners, he starts a new life that is called real life. (Second) life means second (spiritual) birth and life.

To substantiate this concept, we find the theory of "death before death" echoed in the verses and philosophies of numerous poets and mythologists. The pursuit of spiritual serenity, liberation from worldly constraints, and salvation from inappropriate prohibitions find eloquent expression in the writings and sayings of Muslim theosophists. Within their discourse, vibrant imagery and diverse methodologies, including the theory of "death before death," serve as vehicles for the realization of their spiritual aspirations. Furthermore, Sufism and mysticism offer additional interpretations, such as "فنا فی اللہ" (annihilation in God), wherein the seeker voluntarily sheds undesirable traits and behaviors, thereby forging a profound connection with the Divine. This intentional shedding of worldly attachments precedes natural death or the cessation of physical existence, paving the way for a spiritual rebirth characterized by virtuous conduct and spiritual enlightenment (Fazeli, 1998).

In his seminal work "Ainul Qudhat," Hamdani expounds upon the concept of "death before death" as articulated by mystics, asserting that true seekers must undergo two births: the first from their earthly mother, granting them insight into the mortal realm, and the second from within themselves, granting them vision into the eternal realm of God. Indeed, the essence of such a death lies not in the annihilation of the self, but rather in the transcendence of its undesirable attributes. The delineation between physical and spiritual death and birth finds resonance in various mystical writings, where corporal death signifies the demise of the physical body, while intentional death entails the abandonment of its base qualities (Fazeli, 1998).

In the teachings of Jesus, peace be upon him, the axiom "No one can find the way to the kingdom of heaven, who is not born twice" underscores the necessity of spiritual rebirth. This sentiment finds expression in the biblical narrative of Nicodemus, who, perplexed by Jesus' assertion, is enlightened to the truth that spiritual birth transcends physicality and emanates from the divine realm. Similarly, in the anecdote of the scholar, the concept of age is redefined, illustrating that true maturity lies not in worldly pursuits, but in spiritual awakening and consciousness of the eternal realm (Fazeli, 1998).

Within the realm of mystical humanism, spiritual birth emerges as the product of intentional death—a renunciation of material and sensual desires in favor of spiritual enlightenment. While physical life is a predetermined stage bestowed upon all by Allah, spiritual life is a realm of conscious choice and discretion. This spiritual birth, bestowed upon select individuals, transcends the constraints of physicality, offering a pathway to eternal life in the hereafter (Majid, 2011).

Certain attributes are naturally endowed upon humanity by Allah, such as the external and internal structure common to all human beings. While physical birth entails the reception of these inherent traits, spiritual birth necessitates intentional learning and conscious alignment with divine truth. It is through this deliberate pursuit of spiritual enlightenment that individuals undergo a

transformative rebirth, transcending the limitations of the material world to embrace the eternal realm of the spirit (Hashemi, 2022).

In this article, the theory of spiritual birth is clear in several poems of Mirza Khan Ansari, and his position and opinion are shown in the manner of Rokhanis and other poets.

ژوندون که غواړي په مرگي ويره
د رحيم رحم په دا مرحوم دی
(Ansari, 1975, p. 207)

The meaning of the couplet is: The poet believes that life is valuable based on death. If you want to live, then die. The purpose of this death is not physical and permanent natural death, but spiritual and intellectual death. This kind of death is called spiritual birth. When a person abandons wrong actions and starts thinking about the world based on thinking, this time is called the theory of second birth in Sufism, mysticism and religious texts. According to the poet, God's mercy is on the one who has surrendered his life to the Creator.

This is also about it: (In physical birth, a special condition is needed for a human being to be born and it has its own time. The second and spiritual birth also has a special condition and results are obtained based on some special reasons. Spiritual birth is different from physical birth. It is a willful act, Sperm is determined for physical and corporal birth, and the source of the second type of birth is faith, which finds a place in the human body and especially in the heart. When this seed of faith is strengthened in a person, all the internal and external parts of the body do the right things and all the leadership is from the inner world.) (Majid, 2011, p. 86).

Also, Mirza Khan says in other verses about this theory:

چې له مرگه پخوا ويري
خان يې زود مونده ای غوڼه
چې فاني يې خپل صفات کړ
دوباره يې خان حیات کړ
(Ansari, 1975, p. 118)

The meaning of the verses is: (Death before death) The first death is physical, and the people of the world die by these deaths. Obviously, it appears that all humans will die the same, but the difficult situation of death is related to daily life and worship. Among the deaths, there are good and easy deaths and there are also difficult deaths. The second (death) in the first half of the couplet shows the spiritual and intellectual death, which is a new life full of meaning. When human has attained the first death and the second life, he has truly found himself. Finding oneself or finding and discovering oneself is not an easy task.

To prove this, it can be said: Self-awareness is thinking about oneself. Self-awareness is a fundamental issue. Self-knowledge is learned after moral virtues, good thinking, telling the truth, love and self. It is all about learning these moral virtues that can be noticed in a person's thoughts, speech and actions, and it can help a person reach the truth.

Abandonment of one's bad deeds, self-reflection, awareness of the subjugation of the universe, connection with the Creator, love for creation, and all good human actions and achievements come after spiritual birth and it is progressing in the real sense.

Mirza Khan says that the death of one's attributes is the beginning of a second life. Among the attributes, the purpose is to leave wrong actions. Second life means spiritual and intellectual birth. In mysticism, death other than involuntary and physical death is spiritual death. This death is intentional. If a person considers himself to be a being who was created for a specific purpose and the will of a person is necessary in all matters of life, then his life will become meaningful and if he considers himself

powerless and has no purpose for life, then he will never get success.

Mircea Eliade considers religion to be very important in the field of anthropology. He was interested in studying the religious human or the (comprehensive) and (perfect) human, the perfect human and the ideal man in Sufism and mysticism. Dozens of studies have been done. Mircea Eliade seeks to encourage and help people to rediscover themselves. This theory is seen in the poems of Maulana Balkhi and other Rokhani poets, especially Mirza Khan Ansari (Elmi, 2016, p. 7).

خوک خوک مرگ غواړي له ژونده
(Ansari, 1975, p. 126)

The meaning of Mirza's couplet is: (death in life) is to achieve death in life. Death, if we take it in its clear meaning, is to perish. Here death is the cessation of evil deeds. Wanting death from life is actually starting a right and meaningful life. Willful life is called new life, and the first death precedes and is necessary to the second death. He considers the first death as a matter for the second life that a person can do good for himself, society and people.

For a better explanation of the above couplet, we say that: real life means death before death. It was mentioned earlier that Mirza called it spiritual death (intentional death and first death) and second birth (intentional birth). Death and birth by Allah are physical and corporal, but intentional death and birth are spiritual and intellectual. Islam and some other religions believe in death, believe in the second life, and accept the afterlife, so the Sufis, mystics and humanitarian thinkers have their own philosophical views on life and death. They have words and they do not consider every death to be a (death) and they do not see every living thing as a living thing. They want death before death, this death is the beginning of their new life. Despite the fact that a new life begins after a true and divine death, they consider intentional death, which is the abandonment of negation and wrong deeds, as a new life. There is no lie in this life, everything is carried forward based on justice, there is sympathy with humans, humans are looked at from the point of view of humans, there is no prejudice, and there are dozens of human characteristics that are based on humanity and are considered valuable.

چې له مرگه پخوا ويري
نور به نه مري تل حیات دی (انصاري، ۱۳۵۴، ۹ مخ)

چې له مرگه پخوا ويري
دا ژوندون يې اخريڼ دی

چې له مرگه پخوا ويري
گردن خلاص له امانت کا
(Ansari, 1975, p. 24)

The meaning of the above couplets of the poet is: From the point of view of the poet, before physical death, spiritual death is spiritual birth. Before this death, if a person dies by intentional death, then he will become the owner of eternal life. This life is in this world and the hereafter. If a person does good deeds and attains the status of spiritual birth, his name will be remembered in this world after death and he will have achieved success in the hereafter and will have a good life. In the second half of the couplet, it is said that death before physical death leads to a good and eternal life. This is a life that has not been experienced before and will not have been experience such a life later, the purpose of "after" is in this world. Spiritual death leads to eternal life in the hereafter. When a person gives up negativity and gets a new life (spiritual birth) to get the truth, then at this time, the person

clearly appears to the people as a disappeared person, but this abandonment of destruction and many worldly activities mean existence. When a person is born in a physical form, there is no more death. His involuntary death is by the creator and he goes to another world and starts a new life there. A person's place changes, he goes from one world to another, he starts living from one kind of life to another, that is why we say that a person does not die after birth. Human soul is a natural thing that is given to the people of the world, but some of them are dominated by materialism and are far from spirituality. This is an example of Allah's mercy that He has been given to the people of the world.

The death of a person is related to the soul; the body dies, but the soul goes to another world and starts a new life there. The Hindu theory of rebirth and reincarnation, which has its own aspects and has contradictory aspects with Islam to some extent, I mention this theory because in daily life, humanism emphasizes doing good and not doing bad, and they believe that doing good in this world is good because after death, the soul of a person is happy and the soul returns to the world in another good form in order to live a permanent happy life. In this religion, based on this theory, people do good and do not do bad, so that after death, their souls do not face sorrows and problems and become happy. Mirza Khan Ansari considers second life better than the first life. The first life is spent in ignorance and the second life is chosen by knowledge and rationality. This is the life that guarantees the life to come (the hereafter). It gives beauty to life and is a happy life. In the chosen poems of the poet, the purpose of the second life is spiritual birth. Spiritual birth is better than physical birth, but without physical birth this birth does not last. Physical birth gives way to spiritual birth. If there is no body, the meaning loses its value, and if there is no meaning, the body will be like a lump, so the body and the soul are necessary and connected to each other, they are inseparable like the back and the chest (Hashemi, 2020. p. 122).

Conclusion

Mirza Khan Ansari's poetic exploration of the theory of spiritual birth, as depicted in selected couplets from the Rokhani Period, offers profound insights into the human quest for enlightenment and transcendence. Like other eminent poets of Sufism and theosophy, Ansari emphasizes the imperative of preparing for spiritual death before physical demise—a transformative journey encapsulated in the concept of "death before death." Through his poetry, Ansari articulates the necessity of shedding worldly attachments, resisting temptation, and cultivating a deep connection with the Divine as prerequisites for spiritual rebirth.

The theory of spiritual birth, as elucidated by Ansari, transcends mere philosophical abstraction, offering practical guidance for individuals on their spiritual journey. It underscores the notion that true enlightenment is not merely a cognitive understanding but a transformative experience that requires intentional effort and spiritual discipline. By embracing the theory of spiritual birth, individuals embark on a path of self-discovery, self-awareness, and spiritual awakening, ultimately striving to become exemplary Muslims and humans.

In Sufism and theosophy, the theory of spiritual birth serves as a beacon of guidance, illuminating the path towards spiritual growth and enlightenment. It calls upon individuals to awaken to the reality of life and death, urging them to transcend the confines of material existence and embrace the eternal realm of the spirit. Through Ansari's poetry, we gain profound insights into the significance of spiritual rebirth as a means of attaining true fulfilment and communion with the divine.

Suggestions

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the theory of spiritual birth across all poems of Mirza Khan Ansari, delving deeper into the nuances of his poetic expression and philosophical insights.
- Explore the theory of "death before death" and "spiritual birth" in Ansari's poetry through comparative research with other Sufi poets and mystical traditions.
- Examine the cultural and historical context of Ansari's poetry to better understand the influences shaping his philosophical outlook and poetic vision.
- Engage in interdisciplinary studies that integrate literary analysis, philosophical inquiry, and spiritual exploration to gain a holistic understanding of Ansari's contribution to Sufi poetry and mysticism.

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