Incarnation or Divine Transmigration in Rumi’s Masnavi Ma’navi

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Abstract

The Resurrection of man according to actual form of his deed is one of the most significant issues among the Islamic Mystics and scholars that is people with their deeds and actions shape the form for their soul expression, which is the real substance of their soul. Their Purgatorial face will be embodied on the basis of their inward soul expression. This concept has wildly been expressed by Rumi in Masnavi Ma’navi, in which he has given a vivid definition.

In the present study, the researcher has surveyed the concept of incarnation and the way human behavior changes his nature, soul and spirit in line with explaining its difference with transmigration from Rumi’s viewpoint, which is evaluated with respect to Quranic verses of Household.

Key words: Incarnation; Divine transmigration; Soul; Soul expression

INTRODUCTION

Human’s deed and behavior are like seeds implanted in the farmland of this world and harvested in the Resurrection day. This world is hereafter a farm, where human grain of corn grows. Whatever human sees and receives in the Purgatory is actually what he has planted in the field of material world for human soul changes and evolves through his thoughts and actions. “Through gaining knowledge and experiments, the human soul develops and strengthens and becomes a luminous essence, the more humane he is the more prosperity and human honor he gains. In hereafter emanation, knowledge is the composer and characteristic of human soul and experiment is composer and characteristic of human body. As he is a man, his nutrition is valuable knowledge and good deed; in hereafter emanation everybody is inspired with respect to his deeds and knowledge where people’s face would be the result of their deeds and ultimate actions in the world of living, this world is hereafter farm” (Amoli, 1990, p.86) for the Living, Water of knowledge is hidden in darkness, the light of truth in the darkness of soul, and the unity under the tress of plurality because mankind enjoys the transitional truth which is a confederation of light and darkness, combination of the most villainous shadows of the material world and the exalted truth of the divine world. This composition and authorship is due to being endowed with a divine blessing, i.e. he has within himself the potential for human dignity and emanate his superiority to other creatures in the universe and therefore it can be said that, in this world, he is to grow the potential seeds of his existence in order to make his hidden talents actual, assert and develop them in the world’s farmland because he has the potential to reveal divine names and attributes in the mirror of his heart, and his superiority to other creatures through the very potential capacity. Hence, through his deeds and behavior, he should reach his soul and inner self to be ideal. In doing so he should be aware that each deed and action has a form, which will be reflected on his agent in the Purgatory.

We may read in the treatise on fate that: Amongst the necessities in knowing that each deed and action has a form which is reflected upon his agent in the purgatory and this is his punishment that nothing but your deeds comes to you as a reward for their good deeds and people will be judged according to their deeds. (Quoted in Amoli, 1990, p.77)
In other word, human being is potentially a noble creature and is free either to actualize this potential or change it to a brutal creature with inhumane deeds and behaviors and he will become an animal-like creature in the Purgatory, which is also pointed out in the holy Quran: they are like cattle, nay more misguided.

1. INCARNATION

Reincarnation is a combination of deeds and visualization; visualization refers to an image of man’s praises and actions, which become visible in hereafter emanation; deeds refer to acts and behaviors that human being have done during his social life. In this ground, it is argued that literally, incarnation is composed of two words, one signifies the substance namely visualization and the other relates to its emanation, i.e. his deed. This is an appearance of the substance in which visualization has been added to deeds, i.e. substance evolves inly accidents. (Amoli, 1997, pp.3-4)

In description of Masnavi, Allame Sabzevary also believes that: “Accidents are the same deeds that have been changed into the substance of the soul through recursion; hence the intent of incarnation or visualization is penetration of divinity to soul. That is to say human behavior in this world includes incidents which shape the substance of human soul. In this regard Rumi says that:

این عرض های نامار و روزه را
چونک کلابیقی زمانان انتقی
نقل تنومن کرد مر اعراج را
لیک از جوهر برد امراض را
تا مبدل گشته جوهر زین عرض
جون ز برهمزی که زايد شد مرض
گر نبودی مر عرض را نقل و حشر
فعل بودی باطل و اقوال فشار

As regards these accidents of prayers and fasting
Since that which does not endure for two moments becomes naught
’Tis impossible to carry over the accidents (into another state)
But they may take away diseases (defects) from the substance
So that the substance becomes changed by means of this accident
As when disease is removed by abstinence
If there were no carrying over and resurrection of accidents
Action would be vain and words mere babble
(2546/3)

It means that prayers and fasting and other praises are not the substance but incidents that form the actual identity of man during life, which is the hereafter farm, because his deeds and behaviors as a whole make up the of manner of his soul according to which he will be aroused in the Purgatory:

سرتی کان در وجودت غالب است
هم بر آن تصور حشرت واجب است

The manner of acting that preponderates in your nature
In the same form you must need rise (from the dead)

Because:

نقشمان در خور خصائص نور
که معانی ان جهان صورت شود

For in that world ideas are endowed with form
And our (visible) shapes become congruous with our (moral and spiritual) qualities (1866/6)

In order to explain the visualization of deeds or incarnation, first it is proper to briefly overview the kinds of incarnation:

Incarnation is generally divided into three types:
1. Soul transmigration from one body to another in this world

That is, in this world, souls move from one body to another whether the change is from inferior to superior creature, e.g. transmigration of a horse soul to a human body or vice versa, e.g. transition of a human soul to a corpus of a horse, plant or an organic body (Pahlavanian, 2009, p.190).

2. Soul transmigration from an earthly body to an eternal one according to attributes

In this kind of incarnation, after leaving the flesh body and separation, the soul moves into an eternal body, which is the outcome of his moral and divine qualities that he has gained in his worldly life (ibid).

3. Soul and accordingly body transmigration:

The notion behind the third kind is that human soul gets far away from humanity and changes, accordingly his appearance will change from human to whatever his soul has been transmigrated. This kind of change and transformation in human is due to revolt of his sensual feelings. This revolt and overflow of feeling is in a way that changes his human form and temperament to that of animal’s which has been changed according to his attributes (Pahlavanian, 2009, p.190).

2. INCARNATION ACCORDING TO QURAN AND TRADITIONS

Visualization of human deeds in other emanation is true and approved by Quran and traditions and has different manifestation according to mystics and philosophers. In Quran we see lots of verses that explain visualization of human deeds, actions, thoughts and behaviors in Divine or brutal world:

“The day when every soul will find present what they have done of good and evil, they wish that what if there was a far distance between them and their evil deeds.”

(Ali-Imran/30)

In other world and the Purgatory emanation there is nothing but life and living where everything will find soul and spirit and they become aware of divine secrets even
human body comes to life and stand as the witness of your deeds and behaviors, either good or evil.

Hence, the visualization and embodiment of actions are inherent in the substance so “you are only rewarded for what you have been doing” (Ya-Sin/54) because what you see in the Purgatory are rewards and punishments of your deeds and of course this result is adapted by your deeds:

Everyone’s death is of the same quality as himself, O son

To the enemy, an enemy and to the friend a friend

There are several traditions indicative of the Incarnation that imply this fearful and warning reality, i.e. human being will be aroused according to the nature of his deeds and actions, and their face in the Purgatory or heaven will be related to the dominant trait of their soul and spirit. So if the brutal trait become dominant in his soul he will be aroused like an animal, as Imam Sadiq (A.S) stated: animal are the form of your deeds (quoted in Etehad Aghel Be Ma’ghoul, p.404) and/or some people have been better aroused than their inner form in the shape of pigs and apes, or people are all animal except few believers (p. 405), or on the Day of Resurrection people will be gathered according to the actual form of their intentions (Vaselo Shia, Book1, p.134)

3. INCARNATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

Incarnation is also called transmigration because in the Purgatory the typical human forms will be changed into different shapes, in other words: “Incarnation in another emanation, that is visualizing soul attributes to an animal, plant or inanimate objects in not contrary to reality rather considered a natural phenomena among the educated witness ones and it is also approved among the masters of reason and Shari’ a which is apparently implied by the Book and tradition (Mulla Sadra, 2003, p.381).

However, Incarnation as “the transmigration of human soul to an animal-like corpus and never being free from the physical body is a rejected religious view” (p.383).

In Al-mabda’ wa’ l-ma’ad, Mulla, Sadra has brought many reasons on the revocation of incarnation and explicitly has pointed out that “in this world, it is impossible for the soul to move into another body, whether it is human body which is called transformation, animal body named as metamorphosis, plant body known as revocation, or inanimate body which is referred to as embodiment” (p.281).

As it is mentioned before, divine incarnation, which is the same as evoking souls of reason in knowledge and behavior in an animal body, is widely reflected in Rumi’s poetry, Masnavi:
On the Day of Resurrection every hidden thing will be made manifest. Every sinner will be ignominiously exposed by himself.

For even his own members give him the lie. Act then in such wise that the action itself will be (equivalent to) saying I testify and (to making) the most explicit declaration. So that your whole body, limb by limb, O son, will have said I testify as regards both good and ill.
Has become a holy garden and a guiding light
Since you have turned the fire of wrath to meekness
And the darkness of ignorance to shining knowledge
Since you have turned the fire of greed into bounty
And the vile thorns of malice into a rose-garden
Since you have quenched all these fires of your own
For my sake, so that those poisons are now pure sweets
Since you have made fiery lust as a verdant garden
And have sowed therein the seed of fidelity
So that nightingales of prayer and praise
Ever warble sweetly around this garden
Since you have responded to the call of God
And have drawn water out of the hell of lust
For this cause my hell also, for your behoof
Becomes a verdant garden and yields leaves and fruit
(2525-38/5)

As Imam Ali stated
after transmigrance from this ecstatic body, the believers will
find their counterpart with the best appearance, garment and
fragrance that offer them souls and spirits and the blessing
Paradise.
The believer asks: who are you? He replies: “I am you good deeds”.* (Vafi, book 13, p.92)

In other words, if a man in this world does not fulfill
his divine duties according to God’s order, he will
gradually deviates from the straight path of humanity and
moves toward animal world, in this case his human spirit
decline to animal one and he will have a life of animal.
So he will be aroused with an animal like face in the
Purgatory because every deed is adapted with its nature
which is its actual purgatorial shape.

They were digging a pit for the oppressed
They (themselves) fell into the pit, crying “Alas”
They tore the coats of the Joseph
That which they gave they got, piece by piece
(255-6/3)

The purgatorial form of eating orphan’s property is a
fire that will be the food of those in the Hell. “Those who
eat the properties of the orphans unjustly, they swallow
fire into their bellies” (4/10)

The reason behind human’s fear of death is that he
knows there he would find present the true nature of his
inner self. If one is infected with a terrible soul and a
sinful spirit, it certainly would be frightening for him to
face with such an inner self. So as Rumi says:

ای که میرسی رمزگ ادر فرار
آن زخوت ترسانی ای جان هوش دار
زن روز تست نی رمزگ مرگ
ناخوش و خوش هم ضميرت از خود است

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Your fear of death in fleeing (from it)
‘Tis (really) your fear of yourself, take heed O dear soul!
‘Tis your own ugly face, not the visage of death
Your spirit is like the tree, and death (is like) the leaf
It has grown from you, whether it is good or evil
Every hidden thought of yours, foul or fair, is born from yourself
(3441-3/3)
Because all will find tangible forms of what they have accustomed to in the world.

In mystics view, sleep is the lesser resurrection, i.e. a day that insides will become apparent and secrets will be implied meaning of the Day that all things will be tested, who charged him as a theif, Rumi has well explained the
creatures
Is not a gallows erected for the act of robbery?
In the Unseen World the action is given a form
Clings to your skirt like your child
Your action that is born of your soul and body
At dawn when he wakes from slumber
That good and evil will come back to him
If he has disciplined his moral nature
The same nature will present itself to him when he wakes
And if yesterday he was ignorant and wicked and misguided
He will find his left hand black as a letter of mourning
But if yesterday he was morally clean and pious and religious
When he wakes he will gain the precious pearl
(1781-86/5)
In mystics view, sleep is the lesser resurrection, i.e. a sample of the Purgatory and Resurrection:

Our sleep and waking are two witnesses
Which attest to us the significance of death and Resurrection
The lesser resurrection has shown forth the greater resurrection
The lesser death has illuminated the greater death
But this scroll is a fancy and hidden though
At the greater Resurrection it will be very clearly seen
Here this fancy is hidden (only) the traces are visible
But there He from this fancy will produce actual forms
(1787-90/5)
That is to say, what is inside us is the exact form of what we will see in the Purgatory and this is the interpretation of the Day that all things will be tested owing to the fact that every deeds and actions have actual form in the Unseen World:

In what work have you exerted yourself without its returning to you
What have you sown without the produce of the seed coming back to you
Your action that is born of your soul and body
Cling to your skirt like your child
In the Unseen World the action is given a form
Is not a gallows erected for the act of robbery?
How should the gallows resemble robbery, but that is
The form given by God who knoweth things unseen
(418-21/6)
Or as he says in the first book:

There is an unseen bringing forth of effects to action
And the results born of it are not in the control of creatures
(1661/1)
While narrating the story of Luqman and the slaves who charged him as a thief, Rumi has well explained the implied meaning of the Day that all things will be tested, a day that insides will become apparent and secrets will be revealed.

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Those groups of men were running up and down the hills
They began vomiting due to their misery
And the water brought forth the fruit from within them
When Luqman happened to vomit from the center (of his belly)
(Only) pure water was coming up from his inside
If the wisdom of Luqman knows about this demonstration
Then think what the Wisdom of the Lord of Existence is
On the Day when all hidden things will be put to the test
Something hidden and unwished-for will appear from you
(3584-3599)

According to Rumi, the third kind of Incarnation is also accepted. He believes that body and accordingly heart metamorphosis is impossible and allowed and there have been examples of it among earlier nations. Mulla Sadra not only count it as permissible and possible fact but also he believes that is has happened to a group of pagans who have been headed by their ruthless selves and have had weak and feeble sense of reasoning. This is also implied by Quranic verses, i.e. inward joint with outward metamorphosis and turning away from humanity, such as verses that has been revealed about the Israelites. (And turned some of them to apes and swines) (Al-Ma‘idah/60)(Be you apes, despised and rejected) (Al-Baqarah/65)

Through pointing to the Quranic story of Sabbath, Rumi has accepted the third kind of incarnation and has described it beautifully:

In the presence of his master, Luqman was despised
Because of having a black body amidst his other slaves
He would send the slaves to the orchard so that fruit might
Come to him for his relaxation and enjoyment
Among the slaves, Luqman was viewed as a parasite
He was dark of appearance like the night yet full of deep understanding
Those slaves happily ate up all of the fruits
Due to the plundering nature of greed
They told the master that Luqman ate them
The master became bitter and gravely serious toward Luqman
When Luqman inquired about the cause
He opened his lips in disapproval of his master
Luqman said, “O princely master! In the presence of God
A faithless servant is not approved
Test all of us. O noble master
Give us an excessive fill of hot water
And after that make us go into a great desert
You are riding on a mount and we are running on foot.
Then observe the wrong-doer
As well as the actions of the Revealer of Secrets
The master became the water-server of hot water
For the slaves and they drank it out of fear
After that he forced them into the desert plains

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of the body
But there is metamorphosis of the spirit O man endowed with perception
When his spirit becomes the ape spirit
His clay is debased by the ape spirit
If his spirit had possessed the virtue from experience
How should the ass be debased by his form?
The dog of the companions had a goodly character
Was he any worse on account of his form?
The Fellows of the Sabbath suffered outward metamorphosis
In order that the people might behold outwardly their ignominious fall
Through breaking vows of repentance a hundred others Have become hogs and asses inwardly
(2592-99/5)

CONCLUSION
Incarnation is defined as transmigration of the reality of human deeds and attributes to spiritual substance which in the Purgatory will be depicted in a form adapted by it. In other words, man will be aroused according to his inner soul stages and will have an appearance proper to his deeds and behaviors. In addition to Quran, it has also been emphasized in several traditions. Also, Rumi has proposed the issue in his book, Masnavi, in a very effective and informative way. In his opinion, if one ignores the punishment of God, gradually villainous traits will penetrate to his soul and change it to a nature adapted by his deeds; hence after Resurrection he will be in the form of animal.

He will give our fleshly soul the form of an ass
Because He makes the outward forms to be in accordance with the inward nature
This is the manifestation of the secret as the Resurrection
by God, by God, flee from the ass-like body

Your mental pain shall become perceptible to the senses and manifest
See that you do not hold this indication as naught
(352/3)
According to Rumi, incarnation is the same as divine transmigration or inner metamorphosis because his form in the Purgatory will be determined based on dominant behaviors and attributes of human soul.

Yet it is still possible to see the actual purgatorial face of some people for those who have the Purgatorial eye; the story of seeing human’s truth through fingers by one of the companions of Imam Sajjad during Hajj and so many others of this kind in the works narrating mystics life may confirm the above mentioned fact.

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