Reflection of Altruistic Culture in Mystical Literature

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ABSTRACT: In mystical literature, altruism (or magnanimity) and generosity have been used interchangeably by Sufis and Mystics. In fact, anyone can be said to be altruist who manifests the behavior of prominent Imams and divine. The present article tends to show the altruistic reflections in mystical literature. Reviewing mystical literature revealed that the most altruistic ethics derived from Islam, Koranic Teachings, and Prophetic Hadiths. The most striking reflection of altruism in mystical literature includes: being just, grace (or forgiveness), kindness, covenant loyalty, and respect for elders.

Keywords: Altruistic Behavior, Generosity, grace (or forgiveness), and Respect for Elders.

INTRODUCTION

The word magnanimity (altruism)

Magnanimity is an Arabic word meaning altruism and generosity and it is equivalent to altruism in Persian language (Sarraf, 1991). Magnanimity is a religious, Sufic and social terms as heresy that has spread in Islamic countries after Sufism (Nafisi, 1998). There are much talk about altruism and magnanimity. Some like Sohrawardi has mentioned altruism as a Path in his writings, and he recognizes it as a paramount path. He reasons that: “Magnanimity and altruism is superior for the reason of its connectivity to divine prophets” (Sarraf, 1991).

Magnanimity and Altruism Subject

The subject of magnanimity is the human and honor of every science is for its subject “as magnanimist, indeed, is related to glorious characteristics and admirable morals” (Kashefi, 1971).

Causes of Prosperity and Spread of Altruism

An act of altruism is a worthy act, philanthropically approved by prophets and scriptures and is a known culture tonations and ancient countries such as Iran. An altruist is a friend and supportive of friends during hardships and poverty and disabilities. Even some writers and scholars, consider that human society requires altruism and write "all require magnanimity” (Sarraf, 1991). It is not unreasonable when we look at the history, when circumstances led to stipulate (Half al fosoul), formation of association, altruism and fame of people like HatamTaei was the period of ignorance, cruelty, chaos, and hunger. Faith of altruism has prevailed in Iran for centuries alongside with Sufism and has been instrumental in survival of national spirit and uprising and resistance against foreigners and tyrants. And their most important virtues were generosity, sacrifice, disregard of their possession position and relax in the face of events and circumstances. Magnanimity and altruism is the purification of existence, obedience, and comforting people, keeping God's words and Prophet's tradition. Having dialogue with servants of God is necessary for magnanimists (Sarraf, 1991).

In any case, altruism as a culture and ideal human manner and divine is required for serving the man. The oppressed have always been existed in societies, and in turn, have place and productive role in history. The reason of their persistence, influence and reputation go back to this that magnanimists served without rewards and certain expectation. Their overall objective was regarding spiritual matters, having human characteristics; helping their fellow community and pushing the society in that direction. Faith of altruism and magnanimity as an intellectual and social course acceptable and favorable for human and divine can rise with intensity and weakness at different times to suit the needs and circumstance.

Altruism at some point in time rose from a group or a political party whose power and influence was used to oppose the ruling party or group. In reality, these people did not possess any of the altruistic characteristics. In
this article the altruists' personal and social behaviors and their reflections in mystical literature are reviewed. This review is mostly based on prophetic versus and Hadiths (Zarrinkoub, 1990).

In the mystical literature besides defining characteristics of altruism which have numerously been quoted they also encourage people to do chivalry. The value of altruism is so much so that, Abu Abdollah Troghabdi said "Whoever serves an altruist just one day, God will bless him as much as a day of fasting, now imagine whomever serves him a life time, what will God bless him with?" (Attar, 1970).

**DISCUSSION**

The term altruism is rooted in the Koranic Verses and Prophetic Hadiths. From the Verses and Hadiths, mystics concluded that "the principle of altruism is that, one must be constantly occupied with others' affairs". And said "Altruists sacrificed themselves, their liberality, of what they left, gave them to others" Gashiri, 1972).

The altruists in opposing concupiscence arrive at purification. They are needless of people, and become needy of God, and only Allah becomes their sanctuary. And in fact as Attar said: "To altruist, God is the sanctuary" (Attar, 1976).

In aforementioned description, the meaning of altruist and mystic becomes one. Specially, in the definition of Forghani, altruist's high grief and mystic's love misery is because of disability of worthy express to his lover. He says" altruists' sorrow was the one which did not fit into two worlds and can not take them (ibid, 1976).

Attar also attributes the difference between habit and dignity, which are for God's saints, to altruists. "Every person fish in the sea, altruists do it on land, others plant on land, and altruists do it in the sea."(ibid. 1979).

Altruists in mystical literature are discussed in relation to society and people so that Jafar Khaldi defined altruists as Muslims' reverence (ibid. 1976). Junid sees it alongside of patience, humility, and complaisant which takes one to higher values (Gazali, 1990). Hares Mohasebi placed altruism beyond forgiveness and said "Altruism grants justice, (and takes no revenge) and asks for no revenge"(Gashiri, 1982).

Khajeh Abdollah Ansari did not ascribed altruism as apologizing people, and not accepting theirs (Ansari, 1989).

Mystics believe that altruism and being just makes one to enjoy blessings and divine grace (Attar, 1976). Davood Taie understands that the acceptance of people's worshipping by God is in their altruism. He has shown generosity and liberality as synonymous (Ghashiri, 1982). Altruists do not profit from their friends in trading, but receive the base price (ibid. 1982).

Abul-Hasan Forghani describes altruism like the sea which has three springs: liberality, compassion, and being needless of people, becoming needy of God. Khajeh Abdollah Ansari also accounts liberality as altruists' characteristics high and says: "Altruists are the sea and curmudgeon like the river. Seek the pearl in the sea, not in the river" (Ansari, 1989).

Abul-Abbas Ghassab, is known as the king of altruism and liberality, has said "Altruists are peoples comforters, not their horrors as they speak with God about people and watch people from God's side" (Attar, 1976). In his statement, altruist is God's Khalifa who observes God's mercy with people, not only causes no fear and intimidation, but also from the perspectives of God and his love of people, he regards people, meaning with kindness, help and mercy. Being on God's side and not leaving God's servants.

Attar recognizes another feature of altruism that is, fulfilling the promise even though for non-Muslims (ibid. 1976). Among youngest, respect and caress of heart of elders are reckoned very important (Aflaki, 1984). Mystics in mystic literature understood altruism in cherishing the guest and not discriminating between them and said: "Altruism is that it does not matter for you if your food is consumed by infidels or God lovers" (Ghazali, 1982). Motivational behaviors and patterns such as respect for elders, devotion to God, sacrifice, selflessness, hospitality, and assisting servants of God are obtained from the acts of altruism in mystic literature.

Ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: Altruism comes from God's existence, so do altruism and God in return do for your altruism. Know that God created the being, turned it into a man whose head was firm in Tuba Tree and whose branches in Sdrh Almnthy. And some of its branches were sent into the world. So whoever hung from, will enter in to heaven (Ghazali, 1990).

Imam Ali (AS) said: The grand (dignified) people in the world are altruists and grands in afterworld are virtues.

Shqghigh Balkhi asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (as): What is chivalry? Imam said, what do you say? Shqghigh said: "We thank if we are given, and wait if we are refrained. Jafar said, our city dogs are so! Shqghigh said O' BinRasul what is altruism for you? Said: if we are given we bestow, and if not, we wait."(Ghashiri, 1982).

Serrisaghgy ascribed altruism as withdrawal from the world and desire to afterworld. He removed the condition of not having desire to afterworld is from the definition of altruism.
Kharghani has spoken of altruists' spiritual intuition and experience: "Altruism is a language without words, vision without eye, body without deed, reason without thought, and a spring from the sea, and mysteries of the sea. So altruism is a dear whose heart is polished and his heart is the site of the divine attributes. Altruism is the same as granting justice, and asking for no revenge. Altruism is giving equanimity and not wanting that. Virtue is the one where no one will ask for justice on doomsday (judgment day), and altruism is that you will not be asking anyone for justice (Attar, 1976).

Altruism has three signs: first, being true without violation, second worship without grace and third granting without question. But being true without violation is that, one shall not commit sin and be dissident in his covenant thralldom. Worship without grace is that one has not seen goodness from whom he admires. Granting without question is that one shall not discriminate and when he is known still is not questioned. This is a message from a nation to nation but all nations borrowed all three traits (Hajviri, 1979).

One of the synonyms of altruism in mystical literature is whitewashing. At least one of the effects of altruism is renouncing people's imperfections, so it is said: "know that, Magnanimity is whitewashing fellow brothers and not to remark whatever enemies would be happy for" (Ghashiri, 1982).

Mohammad Termezi emphasis on justice and mercy on guests and has said: "Altruism is that both passerby and dweller are the same for you". Termesi in this definition declared that discrimination on reverence is not allowed and hospitality is necessary for altruists. Not only honoring the guest but also compassion to animals is considered to be an act of altruism. Not only honoring the guests, but also guest being patient with the inhumane host is also altruism.

From collective sayings of mystics, altruism can be defined as such: liberality with people while you need that, tolerance, loyalty, bestowal before demand, hospitality, not discriminating in reverence, generosity amongst friends and foes, lack of self-glorification, affability, tolerating peoples' problems, whitewashing, accepting pardons and not self-excusing a lot not so that they would not be ashamed.

Abulghasim Nasrabadi ascribes that magnanimity is more generalized than generosity, meaning that he treats generosity as a branch of magnanimity and its friendship of both worlds has been defined as stigma. In this definition, magnanimity is synonymous with freedom from world and afterworld. It is clear to everyone whose heart is filled with the love of God, and no rooms for other than him (Ghashiri, 1982).

Jafar Khaldi declares that magnanimity despises self, but some of sheiks have said: an altruist is an iconoclast, as God in the story of Ibrahim(AS) said: God, created Abraham both iconoclast and altruist, and since ego is everyone's idol, whoever, opposes his ego indeed he is an altruist (Ghashiri, 1982).

CONCLUSION

From reviewing mystical literature it is deducted that the word altruism is rooted in the Koranic Verses and Prophetic Hadiths. The most important characteristics of altruism are liberality, grace, devotion, and covenant loyalty. Altruism is actually a social factor and it does not confront others' interests. Altruistic morality brings a heart full of love and kind, and a world full of peace and reconciliation to people at any era. In conclusion, altruism in the mystical literature is being null and selflessness against God and servants of God, and revelation of divine attributes in self.

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