

Cognition (*Maarifa*) in Mysticism and Quran

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Abstract

Irfan (the Muslim word for mysticism) literally means knowledge and cognition. So, cognition is the common denominator of all mysticisms. Based on mysticism (Irfan), truth can be achieved through heart discovery and intuition. Mystics prefer the knowledge gained through heart discovery and intuition to rational proofs. They believe that cognition can be gained through the inner eye after the mystic passes and masters various spiritual phases. The result of such cognition would be the opening of the Gate of Heaven Kingdom and the Sphere of Unity to the heart of the mystic. Such cognition is based on Quran, which is the source of sharia as a rich original Islamic source.

Keywords: *Holy Quran, Islamic mysticism, infelt cognition, discover and intuition.*

1. Introduction

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with what the knowledge is and the ways to get it. *Maarifa* (cognition) literally means cognition and knowledge. *فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ* (Yousef, 58) [they came in, Yousef recognized them]. In Raghib's Dictionary of Terms (AL-Mufradat), it is defined as: *Maarifa* (cognition) and *Irfan* (mysticism) aim at the identification and knowledge of an object through thinking and contemplating on its effects. Therefore, this is considered as a special kind of knowledge.

Generally, the earliest traces of epistemological thinking are observed in the *Upanishads* written around the eighth century BC. The main characteristic of such knowledge is that it emphasizes more on the inner world than the material world outside. So, knowledge initiated begins with the understanding of the inner world, then it turns to the world of phenomena.

Based on mysticism (*Irfan*), truth can be achieved through heart discovery and intuition and after going through certain spiritual phases. Mystics prefer the knowledge gained through heart discovery and intuition to rational proofs. They believe that cognition can be gained through the inner eye after the mystic passes and masters various spiritual phases. In the beginning of the sixth century After Hegira, Ein-ul-Qozat discussed some points on cognition (*Maarifa*). Then in the subsequent centuries, Ibn al-Arabi and his commentators and other famous mystics seriously discussed such points. In the introduction to *Zubdat-ul-Haqayeq* (Synopsis of Truths), Ein-ul-Qozat said that his writings dealt with ideological principles and rational doctrine of Islamic beliefs because of the friends' insistence but he had written *Zubdat-ul-Haqayeq* after his mastery over the intuitive and infelt cognition.

In the book, he explains the ideological principals especially the *nubuwwat* (prophet hood) based on infelt cognition. He maintains that such principals cannot be well expressed through words. Ibn al-Arabi presented two ways to achieve knowledge and cognition: one the rational faculty and the other spiritual enterprise and divine assistance. According to the Islamic mysticism, the real cognition results from heart discovery and intuition. Such a knowledge is preferred to rational knowledge. This kind of cognition is achieved because of religious service, worship, and following God's commands. The language in which the Holy Quran uses the word 'heart' is the same as what it is used in mysticism, that is, a container for the

knowledge not based on rational thinking and sense experience. In the Holy Quran we read: **نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ** "الامين على قلبك." (Showra, 193)[Gabriel, The Honest Soul, revealed it to your heart]. In this verse, certainly, the Quran is revealed to the prophet's heart as the center of his cognition and spirituality, not on his mind and thinking.

The origin of the Mystical Cognition

The origin of the illumination and intuition is Quran. This was presented as a hadith in the second century AH. And entered the discussions in the Islamic mysticism and Sufism as لقاء الله (Liqa Allah literally meaning meeting God). Quran mentions some cases such as the Moses requesting God as: "رَبِّ ارْنِي أَنْظُرُ" (Al-Ghiamah, 22-23), (some faces are cheerful, while they look at their Lord). In the verses related to the Prophet's Ascension to Heaven, the vision of God in the world is explicitly expressed: "مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى" ، أَفْتَمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى، وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى ، عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى ، عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى ، إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى ، مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى." (Najm, 11-17).

In addition, in verse **كَذَلِكَ نُرَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ** (Anam, 75) [Also, we showed Abraham the Kingdom of Angels on the Heaven and Earth]. Besides, such as: **كَذَلِكَ نُرَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ** (Haj, 8) [Some people argue with without knowledge and guidance and books]. As an interpretation of the verse, JavadiAmolistas:

This blessed verse criticizes those who dispute over God without knowledge. They do not draw on wisdom, nor on mysticism nor on Revelation that is presented in the Book of God. Besides, this verse, introduces sources of knowledge and cognition.

With investigating this verse, it follows that there are four ways to get knowledge:

1. Sense which is available for everyone,
2. Reason which some people can get,
3. Refinement and purification of the heart that belongs to the mystic intuition,
4. Quran and the revelation that the Divine Prophets present. (JavadiAmoli, 2008; 161).

3. Cognition in Mysticism

Mysticism is based on discovery and sensing through heart accompanied by spiritual journey, tolerance of austerity. In mysticism, the most important way to know the truth is the heart. It is capable of receiving the hidden mysteries. It can be a container to the spiritual manifestations and meanings. It must be noted that when the heart experienced difficulties and follows God's commands, it will be made ready to receive the truths. As a definition of mystic knowledge, Gheisari believes that the mystic knowledge refers to the knowledge of the unseen and the real meaning behind the veil or in the presence of all senses (Gheisari, 2002; 33).

The knowledge and the ways to get are based on the heart infelt cognition. In other words, there is a way beyond the mind, sense and even prophets' Revelations by which a mystic can get the pure truths without any mediation. Such knowledge can be obtained through the heart without reliance on mind and reasoning, and there is no mediator between human and God. According to Abol-Hossein Nouri, mind cannot go through such away. Shams –ul-din Mohammad Lahiji stated that: since the real knowledge cannot be achieved through means and reasoning, put away the mind...because the Light of the Truth will remove the apparent world, and the mind cannot understand the pure reality through thinking reasoning (Lahiji, 2010; 81).

In the school of Illumination, the Purity of the Inner Self and the purification of the heart are considered as the essential means to know and achieve the truth. In this way, human can get the truth through the Inner Self. In other words, knowledge and discovery in mysticism refer to experiencing the reality through heart after passing difficulties (Ebrahimian, 2008; 20).

Nosratollah Forouhar regards *Maarifa* (knowledge) as undefinable and infelicitous. He believes that the available definitions are the definitions of epistemology (science of cognition) not the definition of cognition itself. He divides epistemology in some categories: epistemology, knowledge of science, knowledge of - knowledge, and cognition of cognition ((Forouhar, 2007; 226).

He considers the latter as the most perfect kind of knowledge quoting Najm-ul-Din Razi as saying that in my belief cognition is to know God's attributes and existence. Razi makes his conclusion based on the Divine hadith saying «فَأَحْبَبْتُ أَنْ أَعْرَفَ». (I liked to be known). He classified knowledge into three categories: rational knowledge, ideational knowledge, and intuitive knowledge.

Abol-Hossein Nour views the cognition of God as visual, doubt-proof, intuitive and heart-based knowledge. Once, someone asked him:

How is it that wisdom cannot see God but He is just perceived through wisdom? He replied: "how a time-limited being can see a timeless being and how the one who created how can be expressed and described by how? Moreover, how can the one without beginning and end be seen and understood? He added that His (God's) beginning as the same as His end and His hidden is the same as His apparent. Sometimes, He calls you and sometimes, He repels you so that the pleasure of meeting can be renewed, and your serving face can be refreshed. The person who knows Him through his creatures loses visual (meeting) cognition. The creatures came into being upon His commands. Meeting enjoys such domain and respect in which there is no weakness. (Seraj. 2002, 91)

In mystical epistemology, the heart is the place of knowledge and cognition which is preferred to the sense-based and intellectual knowledge. Ibn- al- Arabi regards the heart as the place of knowledge not the place of feelings and emotions. He calls this word – heart- used 131 times in the Holy Quran, as Mecca, the holiest place in the world for Muslims. He expressed that the heart is the God's throne in the Microcosm (World the Minor) because we read in a hadith that : 'The Heaven and Earth could not contain me, but my faithful servant' heart contained me.' *Fotouhat (The Conquests)*, Ibn-al-Arabi: certainly, there is a point in the constant changes of the world, and this is noticed by those who have sound hearts. Because the heart changes through states, so heart is called *qalb* in Arabic (*qalb* literally means change, revolution).

Heart is the center for the understandings and perceptions beyond the mind and wisdom.

Regarding the heart, Kharazmi asserts:

Know that heart is sometimes applied to the Rational Soul since it can perceive the holistic and partial meanings. This standing of heart is referred to as *Aql-I Mustafad* (Purporting wisdom) by the philosophers or theologians. The reason that why heart is called *qalb* (literally meaning change, mutation, alternation) in Arabic is that it is an alternation between the pure wisdom (Reason) and the Inner World, and because there is an aspect for heart in each world of the five worlds. It alternates among these five aspects. And this heart is a unity appearing among the Divine Names. Heart can manifest each name with justice. It is a medium between the apparent world and the inner world. The physical and mental faculties result from the heart. It benefits all the faculties" (Kharazmi, 1998, 590)

Regarding the inner intuition and discovery by heart, Motahari asserts: Although human is unified creature, he has hundreds or thousands of dimensions. The human refers to a collection of thoughts, desires, fears, hopes, loves, and all are like rivers and creeks meeting in one point. Also, this center is like a deep sea of whose depth no knowledgeable person can make a claim. Couldn't claim to know the depth. The philosophers, mystics and psychologists each study this fathomless sea in their turns, and each one can get knowledge of some of its mysteries to some extent, but mystics have been more successful than others. What the Holy Quran is calling heart refers to the reality of the very. Whatever we call *Rouh-e Zaher* (the Apparent Soul) are all rivers and creeks joining this sea. Even the Reason is one of the branches (creeks) joining this sea (Motahari, 2011; 60).

4. Cognition in the Holy Quran

The intuitive and heart-based cognition is emphasized in various verses of the Holy Quran such as: "وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ" (Taghabun, 11) [Everyone who has faith in God, He will guide his heart, and God knows everything]. Here, the guidance of heart refers to the infelt knowledge and sagacity, and this is not the empirical and rational knowledge, but the mystic and intuitive cognition.

The Islamic mystics believe that the intuitive cognition is necessary because the Holy Quran express that: "وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاصِرَةٌ، إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ"؛ "فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ"؛ (ق، 22) [Faces turning to the Lord that day. We removed the covers from your eyes, now your eyesight is powerful] "رَبِّاَرِنِيَاظُرَالِيك" (Araf, 143) [My God, show Thyself to me]. They think that they can see God (not by real world eye but by heart) in this world and hereafter. Also, they refer to certain hadiths of prophet and Imams, and regard seeing God as the important principle and concept in their school of thought. For example, they refer to Imam Ali's words as: "كَيْفَ أَعْبُدُ رَبًّا لَمْ أَرَهُ"؟ (How can I worship the Lord that I cannot see?)

To show the importance of heart understandings in Quran, Motahari stated that: wherever the Holy Quran speaks of revelation, the mind is not mentioned, but all that is said is related to the Prophet's heart. It means that Quran is not the result of mind and reasoning of the Prophet, but the prophet's heart attained a state capable of receiving transcendental truths. This state of heart is beyond our imagination. (Motahari, 2011; 61).

In the Glorious Quran, the accurate understanding belongs to heart as: "أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ لِقَلْبِهِمْ يَعْقِلُونَ بَهَا:" (Haj, 46). [Do they not walk in the Earth having hearts by which they can understand?]. It is inferred that truth can be achieved through sound hearts, such cognition orients human toward the kingdom of Heavens and makes his heart a place for the manifestation of the Light of God.

One of the important concepts in the Qur'anic knowledge is the discussion on discovery and intuition. Discovery and intuition are the manifestations of Divine Names. It means that heart can meet God. In Quran, a kind of Reason is mentioned which is unified with intuition. It is referred to as Al-lub (اللب). According to Khajeh Abdullah Ansari and Ez-ul-din Kashani, intuition is a state of knowledge, and a mystic can see some of God's manifestations after passing through difficulties, and the seeker reaches the stage of trance. To confirm this concept, some Quranic verses are referred to such as "وَدَنَىٰ" and "فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ" و"دَنَىٰ" [When his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain] and [approached and was near as much as the frame of two arches or nearer]..

In this regard, Ruzbahani says "When the Truth (God) wills to manifest Himself, He will make the eyes of the beholders seeing by His Light. Thus, the servant sees God through God. Thus if intuition means presence, it will be the standing of certainty, but if it means observation it will be the standing of clearness". (Boghli, 2011, 142)

To clarify the topic of divine observation, Khajeh Abdullah Ansari refers to the Qur'anic verse "إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ الشَّهِيدُ" [There is a point for everyone who has a heart and is aware, and he is the witness]. He believes that the word *Shahid* here is an Arabic nominative noun meaning witness, observer. Wrote:

'Observation is the fall of covers, and it is superior to intuition, because it is the realm of Divine attributes, there is traces of ambiguity and (human) color, but observation is the realm of the Exact existence'.

To prove the standing of observation, Najm-ul-Din Daya refers to the Qur'anic verse "مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ أَفَتَمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ" (نجم، 13)

[He did not told lies on what the heart saw, do you cry lies to what he saw? Of course, he saw it another time]. He regards the condition for the reception of Divine Light as the removal of the impurity of the Nature and the dark attributes of heart by remember in God. (Najm-ul-Din Daya, 2008, 298]

5. Conclusion

Inspired by the Qur'anic verses, Muslim mystics consider heart as the place for the manifestation of love and the cognition of God. It is the means by which human becomes able to get knowledge of the real existence of objects, and mirror the Divine knowledge. In mysticism, knowledge is achieved through discovery and illumination. This is superior to the knowledge based on thinking and reasoning. Because some matters such as unseen facts are beyond the sense and mind, and they cannot be discovered by the material Reason. Mind faces limitations, while mystic is the product of heart, and many realities are revealed through direct understanding and intuition.

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