



RESEARCH PAPER

A Brief Description of Bēdil's Mystical and Philosophical Ideas

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at investigating a comprehensive view of reality and human life expressed in the poetry of Bēdil; he acknowledges reality as the consciousness of Divine Unity by realizing God as the descending arch of reality and considers emanation as the cosmological source of creation. At the same time, he considers Man as the ascending arch of reality, as the ontological mirror of Divine reflection. He considers 'sukhan' (speech or poetry) as the ontological foundation of language and multiplicity in which meaning is inherently undetermined and reality is beyond the reach of human reason; only intuition is the true source of knowledge to realize the essential nature of things. This is qualitative study based on poetic analysis of Bēdil's weltanschauung which is a creative synthesis of mystical consciousness and philosophical wisdom. Through aestheticization of meaning, he wants both moral development and growth of self as the prime objectives for humanity and it demands creative appreciation.

KEYWORDS Bewilderment, Descent, Divine Immanence, Emanation, Imroz, Divine Transcendence, Intuition, Mirror, Multiplicity, Selflessness, Sukhan, Unity

Introduction

Mirzā' Abd al-Qādir Bēdil (1642-1720) is an Indo-Persian mystical and philosophical poet. He is the fore-most representative of the "Indian style" of Persian poetry (Siddiqi, 1989). He was born in 'Aẓīmābād (Bihar) in the Mughal period of Shāh Jahān (1592-1666). He lived most of his life during the reign of Awrangzeb (1618-1707), and died in Delhi in the time period of Muḥammad Shāh (1702-1748). In his youth, he traveled extensively in Bihar, Orissa, and Bengal, and studied with enigmatic Sufis (Kovacs, 2013; Siddiqi, 1975) and his travels and mystical encounters with Sufis provides unique and vibrant experiences of life necessary for creative self.

As far as the creative work of Bēdil is concerned, the Kabul edition of his Kollyiāt (1962-65) comprises three volumes of poetry (147,000 verses) and one of prose (Siddiqi, 1989). First volume is Dīvan-i-Bēdil (Ġazaliāt) which consists of 3000 Ġazals. Bēdil's mystical and passionate Ġazals are among the best in the Indo-Persian literary tradition; only Amīr Ḳosrow equals him in quality and quantity (Siddiqi, 1989). These Ġazals are the quintessence of creative imagination. The trend toward intellectualization of imagery and obfuscation of expression found in his predecessors as an innovative literary Indian style (Sabk-e Hendī) (Faruqi, 2004) culminated in Bēdil's Ġazals. His ideas, similes, metaphors, and constructions all convey a highly intricate cerebral formalism to the point of departing from the basic Ġazal form (Siddiqi, 1989) and makes him poet of distinctive literary style.

He wrote four Masnawīs: Moḥiṭ-e-A‘zam (The greatest ocean, 1667), Ṭeslīm-e ḥayrat (The talisman of bewilderment, 1669), Ṭūr-e ma‘refat (The Sinai of gnosis, 1687-88) and ‘Erfān (Gnosis, 1712). These four Maṭnawīs is a combination of mystical intuition, philosophical subtly and aesthetically acute rhetoric. He wrote an autobiography named Chahār ‘Unṣur (The four elements, 1694). It has four chapters, corresponding to the four elements, air, water, fire, and earth. It includes mystical and philosophical expositions on such topics as the nature of the soul, the significance of dreams, and the benefits of speech and silence (Siddiqi, 1989). Besides, juvenile descriptions, memoirs about religious experiences and stories of traveling life are salient aspects of his biography.

Literature Review

Earliest Bēdil studies contain an account of “Bēdil's life, summaries of his works, but not much in the way of literary criticism.” (Kovacs, 2013) Recently, Iranian scholars, Shafī‘ī Kadkanī in his book on Bedil recognizes Bēdil's poetry, particularly his language, imagery and style. He compares his metaphors and images based on synesthesia experience to the fantastic and dissonant images of Surrealist movement (Kadkani, 1988).” Moazzam Siddiqi, in his Ph.D. dissertation, discusses “Bēdil's Maṣnavī ‘Irfān (Siddiqi, 1975) under the influence of Sufi metaphysics of Ibn ‘Arabi (1165–1240) and pay particular attention to nature of being (ontology) the origin and development of the universe (cosmology) and creative use of lyrical symbols and metaphors. Recently Hajnalka Kovacs, in her research on Bedil's Maṣnavī Moḥiṭ-e-A‘zam (Kovacs, 2013) describes Bēdil's cosmogonic description of the universe, intellectual and mystical impact of Ibn ‘Arabi's on Bēdil and concept of speech particularly Divine speech. Nasim Fekrat's study explores key esoteric ideas of Bēdil like human selflessness, heart as mirror of Divine reflection and the existential experience of bewilderment (Fikrat, 2013). Most recently Jane Mikkelsen “studies the entanglements between imagination, Persian lyric poetry, and Islamic thought in early modern India and Iran particularly with reference to Bēdil whose lyric aim is to recover the embodied, subjectively experienced knowledge of true reality is nothing but philosophy conducted in metaphor.” (Mikkelsen, 2019).

This paper explores the mystical and philosophical ideas of Bēdil, expressed recurrently in his poetry and prose. Bēdil's worldview is mysticism and philosophy portrayed by the creative imagination of an exceptional poet-philosopher of the seventeenth century and it is worthy to guide a good life.

Bēdil's philosophical ideas begin with his unique literary position in the Indo-Persian literature, especially his linguistics idea of ‘sukhan’, semantic theory and the distinctive idea of ‘aestheticization of meaning’ which has a great value even for contemporary literary and linguistic theory. Bēdil's epistemology based on intuition as the authentic source of knowledge leads him to explore the key mystical ideas of Sufi metaphysics like the essential nature of human self, world, time and God as the ontological components of Ultimate Reality. The last part of the paper consists of conclusion based on the mystical and philosophical ideas of Bēdil.

Key Philosophical Ideas: Linguistic-Semantic Theory and Epistemology

The remarkable literary position of Bēdil was acknowledged by both *Ghalib* and Iqbal; according to *Ghalib* (d.1869), poetry is a creative act of innovative meaning (*Ma‘ni āfrīnī*), in this context, Bēdil is considered one of the greatest poets of Mughal Empire (1526-1857). Muḥammad Iqbal (d.1938) said, “Bēdil is a speculative mind of the highest order, perhaps, the greatest poet-thinker that India has produced since the days of Adi Shankara (died 750 CE)”. (Iqbal, 1988).

Philosophical discernment (Zauq) is the key aspect of Bēdil's poetry; as a visionary mind of intellectual taste, he always searches for the state of things as they actually exist rather than their phenomenological appearance.

As a person of philosophical perception, he considers appearance as a metaphor for reality. So, with the help of subtle sense perception, he discovers the inner meaning of life and transforms the abstract ideas into expressive feelings through imagination.

According to Ahmad Javed, Bēdil inherited the method of beautified causation from Ṣā'eb Tabrizi (d.1676), but all elements of poetic grandeur in Bēdil are original and self-created. He uses both internal and external senses to experience the thing (or situation) and expresses it in unique images to paint meaning so that poetic reasoning represents a fresh concept, less abstracted and more like a living experience full of life and feelings.

Bēdil's divine knowledge of reality and things of the world is an intellectual production of mystical consciousness, at same time, his subtle meaning is the direct result of a Philosophical discernment (Zauq) of highest order." (Javaid, 2017).

Besides, an intimate knowledge of God (*Ma'rifah*) through intuition, an extraordinary mystical "unveiling" (Kāf) made his poetry a spectacular model of esoteric knowledge called knowledge by presence (Tymieniecka, 2003).

Whether it is metaphysics or epistemology, axiology or linguistics, Bēdil's anthropocentric vision of Reality makes the aestheticization of meaning a sublime feature of his oeuvre. Both *Ghalib* (d.1869) Iqbāl (d.1938) inherited this literary feature of Bēdil and used it creatively in their Urdu and Persian works. Especially, *Ghalib* adopted the whole structure of Indian literary style (Sabk-e Hendī) and applied it aesthetically in his Urdu poetry and introduced it to Urdu literature.

In his autobiography, *Chahār'Unsur* (The Four Elements), Bēdil presented his linguistic idea of sukhan. In his poetics, sukhan is the basic term which has different meanings like logos, speech or discourse. It is also used to express the unity of form and meaning in poetry. For Bēdil, "Sukhan is the very soul of the world. When sukhan hides its meaning then the world comes to an end. When it expresses itself in a clear alphabet, then the world rises once again." (Narang, 2017).

Philosophically, Sukhan is a term of ontological significance as it provides the knowledge of being and existence. According to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), "Language is the house of being" (Heidegger, 1998, 239) so language or words or sukhan, by nature, are ontological. Bēdil portrays his idea of sukhan in the following couplet:

چه دنیا؟ رہ لفظ سرکردنش

چه عقبی؟ بمعنی نظرکردنش (Khwaja, 1961)

What is this world? It is all a play on words.

What is the next world? It is the work of Sukhan too.

This world is nothing but the formation of words and the hereafter is nothing but the observation of its meaning. He further elaborates that the universe is a realm of appearance and hidden Reality. In the realm of the unseen, sukhan (language) is reality and in the tangible world it is characterized as the source of competence and efficiency.

باخفا حقیقت, بافشا مجاز

(Khwaja, 1961) به تشبیه عالم! به تنزیه راز

Of Sukhan's miracles, do not ask me more.

It hides what is real and it exhibits what is unreal.

By simile it is this world and by abstraction

It is the biggest secret.

Sukhan (language) is secret in the realm of transcendence and it is an act of affirmation in the sensible world of immanence. In human life, sukhan appears as a miracle of words and syntax which carries the secret and exposes it at the same time. So, by nature, it has a dual function; it symbolizes both Reality and expresses world metaphorically. He further explains:

بفهمی اگر رمز لوح و قلم

(Khwaja, 1961) کہ غیر از سخن چیست آنجا رقم

If you to know

The secret meaning of 'pen and tablet',

Then you should know that

Nothing except Sukhan is written there.

The reality of sukhan (language) is not just limited to this world, it has its relevance and significance in the form of pen and tablet beginning from the pre-created realm of Reality, where there exists only meaning and nothing else. So there is nothing but the world of sukhan (language), and it is the sole reality of Divine Self-Disclosure.

Bēdil's world view revolves around the idea of sukhan. Human persona is bound by the phenomena of sukhan (language). And all the freedom and emancipation is realized through it. It has both subjective and objective dimensions; in the objective world, it is discourse, text, speech and creative writing. On the other hand, sukhan also expresses itself subjectively or inclusively. So everything that configures its existence through feeling, thought and imagination belongs to the realm of sukhan (language). Even Bēdil considers silence as language. So "Bēdil's whole world view is embedded in just one word – sukhan. It is dynamic essence of signification, means of communication and whole ontological being." (Narang, 2017, 132).

Bēdil's linguistic idea of sukhan (language) leads us to his quest of searching for the meaning of life. According to him, meaning, in accordance with fact or reality, are not able to be found or discovered, because they are neither dependable nor subject to obligations. Bēdil says:

گل شگفته در آئینه بوش

(Badayuni, 2006,140) می توان دید و لے چیدن نیست

In my sensible experience

Flower is blooming.

I can see it

But it is beyond my access

I cannot pluck flower.

Just like flowers cannot be plucked, so meaning cannot be determined. Here, to explain the nature of meaning, Shīr' Alī Khañ Lūdī, in his *Tazkirah-i Mir'at al-khayal* narrates an encounter between Bēdil and his contemporary poet Nāṣir Alī Sirhindī (d. 1696):

“One day in the literary salon of Navvāb Shukr Allah Khañ, Bēdil happened to meet Nāṣir Alī Sirhindī who objected to the opening couplet of one of his ghazals, pointing the violation of a grammatical rule, for the meaning follows from the word: every time a word is born, a meaning appears too. Bēdil smiled and said that the meaning that you think to be following from the word itself is not more than a word. It means meaning as such is not conveyed by any word. Take the example of the reality of the human self - no matter how many details and commentaries have been described in the books, but the true meaning of self is not revealed to any extent. Nāṣir Alī became silent.” (Kovacs, 2013,54) The opening couplet of ghazal is:

نه شد آئینه کیفیت ما ظاہر آرائی

نہاں ماندم چوں معنی بچندیں لفظ پیدائی (Kovacs, 2013,54)

From the mirror of our inner state, nothing has come to adorn the manifest world:

Despite all these apparent words we remained hidden, like the meaning.

So Bēdil's response of 'what we consider the meaning of a particular word is also another word' represents meaning. Likewise, the essence of self cannot be revealed through words. Bēdil further told Nāṣir Alī that شعر خوب معنی ندارد i.e. 'in a good couplet meaning' cannot be determined, because understanding depends on the hermeneutic approach of the reader. Hence fixed and final opinion or judgment about certain meaning cannot be settled.

Bēdil's concept of meaning has an interesting resemblance with both ancient Indian wisdom and postmodern theory of language. Like Saussure, Bēdil “emphasizes the elements of signification; ‘Nothing is signified without a signifier’. Everything starts and ends with meaning, which needs to be fresh and ingenious.” (Narang, 2017, 106,107)- He says:

اصل معنیست کز تقاضایش

لفظ می بالد و اداهایش (Khwaja, 1961,18)

The real thing is the meaning Because of whose (natural) requirements

The word and its peculiarities evolve.

In his poetics, philosophical depth of thought or a creative act of innovative meaning “(Ma'ni āfrīnī) is considered an epistemological concept. It is concerned with questions like what is begotten from a couplet or poem. (Farooqi, 2011, 15)- Aestheticization of meaning means making the already established 'meaning-structure of a word or expression' more beautiful; in other words, it is “to replace the meaning, determined by a particular belief or ideology, with aesthetically conscious creative imagination so that it provides pleasure to the

senses and happy feelings to mind." (Javaid, 2018)- a poet of creative mind with highest order, if blessed with philosophical discernment, "performs the process of aestheticization by using the cognitive and imaginative faculty of mind and transforms the perspective of meaning." (Javaid, 2017)- Into more aesthetically pleasurable form that should be delighting for senses, exciting for intellect and admiring for emotions. Bēdil is blessed with the wonderful capacity of not only creating fresh meaning of text but also using the other perspective of mind simultaneously in making his poetry creatively attractive and aesthetically appealing.

Bēdil derives meaning from observations and experiences of life. According to him, every man expresses his own wisdom based on sense experience and intellect and it helps him to develop a perception and even judgment about a thing or phenomenon. But, for Bēdil, a person's natural or rational mode of perception cannot be objectified. It may be one perspective of Reality, but not the whole Reality. Bēdil says:

بر کس این جا از مقام و حال خود گوید خبر

از زبانم حرف او گر بشنوی باور مکن (Narang, 2013, 185)

Here, the vision of every person tells his state of mind and position of affairs.

If you hear anything from me about him, do not believe it.

So, to ascertain the truth, a person's observations and reason demonstrates his line of vision and scope of wisdom and it is not binding on anyone else to accept his judgments with certainty.

Bēdil believes that sense perception and rationality are the basic sources for ascertaining knowledge of world (matter and forms), but realizing the state of things as they actually exist, reality of human self and true knowledge about the nature of God is not possible without intuition (Kashf). (Toshihiko, 1971, 41, 42)- So, for Bēdil, intuition i.e. knowledge by presence, is a true and real source of knowledge. For this he suggests self-realization and introspection.

اے نکہت گل اندکی از رنگ بیرون آ

"O thou flower's fragrance;

Come out of the world of color!"

Throughout his life, Bēdil continues his deliberation about the essential nature of the universe and realizes reality through intuition (Kashf). That is why he suggests transcending from the realm of color which signifies the material world because, for him, reason may touch the surface, but it cannot enter into reality's process of being and becoming.

Mystical Ideas: Nature of Human Self, World, Time and God:

The ultimate nature of reality, in the case of Bēdil, is Sufi metaphysics which consists of the nature of human self, world and God as the creator of whole reality.

Bēdil begins with the nature of self and asserts that though everything in the universe is created by God, yet, in the ontological hierarchy - God, Universe and Man -Man is the quintessence of creation. Either this world or hereafter, Man as the archetype of human beings is the personification of creation. He says:

چه نام است دنیا چه نام است عقبی

تو معمار این خانه بانی گمان را (Siddiqi,Z.A.1999,13)

What is the name of this and the next world?

You (human person) are architecture

Of this fancy house (universe).

The hustle and bustle of life in this world is due to the creative presence of Man gifted with language, reason and imagination as the instrumental faculties of grace and grandeur to cause liveliness in the universe. Bēdil portrays the foremost position of Man in the following verse:

ساز آفاق جمله خاموش است

این قدر شور زیر و بم مانیم (Ghani, 2012,80)

Melodious Sounds of the world horizons are silent

Here, in this universe

So much and low-high tunes of liveliness is due to human being

Universe is the realm of silence, but Man is a euphony, a melodious voice adding the speech and music to life and makes the world a kaleidoscopic cacophony. In a rich mystical mode, Bēdil describes the nature of human self and says:

شخص تصویریم بیدل از کمال ما می پرس

حرف ما ناگفتنی و کار ما ناکردنی (Javaid, 2017,5)

Bēdil, in our existential nature

We are perfect forms, do not ask for our excellence.

We are that word which cannot be speak,

We are that action which cannot be done.

'*Shakḥ-I Taṣvīrāīm*' is the key phrase in this verse, here, *Shakḥ* is denoting the archetype of human person and that archetype is the perfect form that it cannot be expressed either in ordinary language or usual action. The perspective of this archetype of the human person can be traced back in the mystical idea of Eternal Archetypes (A'yan Thābitāh) (Toshihiko, 1983, 159-163). Eternal Archetypes are the pre-creation ontological forms - of all entities and all realms - exist in the mind of the Absolute as Divine Knowledge. So Bēdil's *Shakḥ-I Taṣvīrāīm* signifies Eternal Archetypes.

Just like, Divine knowledge, ontologically, is prior to creation, so as, Bēdil says, our ontological identity is prior to the realm of existence. We cannot be determined by the natural laws of the temporal world. In fact, we are Divine Forms, transcendent from the duality of appearance and reality. Man, in Divine Knowledge, is the container of his own reality. *Shakḥ-I Taṣvīrāīm* means, in essence, our forms and reality are one and the same and our reality based on the ontological identity and it cannot be evaluated by the evolutionary principles of created world. So, in man, there exists a transcendent substance i.e. man in his reality, is supra temporal and supra spatial.

Besides transcendent substance, Bēdil describes human nature with three key attributes: selflessness or incapacity ('ajz), bewilderment (ḥayrat) and mirror (āīna). Among these, the first attribute, selflessness or incapacity ('ajz) 'عجز', is a key term Bidel used in his dīwān to represent the profound images of human character like modesty (uftādagī), humbleness (inkisār) and self-contention (qanā'at). By selflessness or incapacity ('ajz), he "awakens the profound inner space of self, the heart." (Fikrat, 2013, 36-37). His dīwān begins with this fundamental attribute appearing in the first line.

با اوج کبریا کز پہلوی عجز است نگاه آنجا

سر مونی گر اینجا خم شوی بشکن کلاه آنجا (Bidel, 1963)

The path to Divine glory is reached through 'ajz

If you show little self-effacement here,

Break your turban there in the royal holy court.

Here the key mystical term, selflessness ('ajz), signifies Man's "inherent state of powerlessness, in contrast to God's being All-Powerful, as essential to define the path to Ma'rifah (an intimate knowledge of God)." (Fikrat, 2013, 29, 63). It means to say that Bēdil identifies an underlying link between human selflessness and knowledge of God (Ma'rifah). In other words, metaphysical teachings of Bēdil revolve around the selflessness ('ajz) of the human person. It is not love (like Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi) but human selflessness that leads to intimate knowledge of God as a "requirement for acknowledgement of the Divine truth, while love is either unconditional or conditional and must be earned." (Fikrat, 2013, 63-64). He believes that "human beings have an intrinsic disadvantage in not being able to comprehend everything about Divine reality, and by that inherent inability ('ajz), human person falls into bewilderment." (Fikrat, 2013, 62).

به دشت عجز تحیر متاع قافله ایم

اگر بر آینه محمل کشیم نیست عجب (Bidel, 1963, 162)

In the desert of inability in which our caravan passes through

Our commodity is bewilderment

It should not be a surprise if we place our palanquin over the mirror

Metaphorically speaking, this world is like a desert and a group of people traveling together in one long line in one direction and the valuable thing of this caravan as an outcome is nothing but a feeling of perplexity and bewilderment as we are living in this world with incapacity.

The feeling of perplexity and bewilderment is the second most important key attribute Bēdil uses to describe the nature of human self. Bewilderment (Hayrat) (Fikrat, 2013, 60-61) is a profound feeling of human existence which he uses to illustrate the experience of new and extraordinary things, especially to know the ultimate nature of things and Reality.

Like Ibn 'Arabi, "Bēdil adopts bewilderment in order to discover the mystery of existence and true knowledge cannot be fully achieved; notwithstanding, some aspects of it can be achieved through bewilderment." (Fikrat, 2013, 62).

Expressing the ascending arch of Reality, Bēdil believes that “it is impossible to experience a state of unity unless one falls into bewilderment, which does not necessarily mean finding God, but being effaced (maḥw) in Him and in His beauty, which is considered the highest spiritual state.” (Fikrat, 2013, 57) reflected by human heart (Qalb).

Bēdil uses the metaphor of a mirror (āīnā) for the human heart as it is reflecting the essence of God and Unity of Being. He asserts that “everything in this world reflects God’s essence and when he sees himself in the mirror, he becomes bewildered, and he has no control over him anymore because he has become aware of God’s greatness in creation.” (Fikrat, 2013, 64). He portrays deep existential condition of human person in following couplet.

بی اختیار حیرتم از حیرتم مپرس

أئینه است أئینه ساز نیست (Bidel, 1963, 292)

Do not ask me of my bewilderment

Because I am involuntarily bewildered

The Mirror is the mirror and

There is not a mirror-maker

Human heart (Qalb) as the mirror of Reality reflects the kaleidoscopic images of creation and world, not the Reality itself. The existential process of self-consciousness takes place in the most profound spiritual organ of human self, (Qalb), based on the mystical realization of selflessness or incapacity (‘ajz) that results in the theophanic visions (Tajallīyāt) (Fikrat, 2013, 61) of Reality which are so strong that a human person cannot resist bewilderment. So the process of Self-realization is ontologically connected to mystical vision of the World and Reality which Bēdil narrates in following couplet:

در فکر خودم معنی او چهره کشاشد

خورشید برون ریختم از ذره شگافی (Siddiqui, 2014, 50)

I was reflecting on my own self

And His (God) reality was unveiled.

As if I found the sun while searching for the secrets of the atom.

In the second line, Khūrshīd, the sun symbolizes both God and Universe. So self-knowledge leads to theophanic vision of the world which leads us to the Bēdil view about the nature of the world.

As far as the origin and development of the universe is concerned, Bēdil affirms creation as emanative process called ‘ontological descent’ “it begins with Pure Being, devoid of qualities and relations, when there were no accidents, no contradictions, and no talk of the necessary and the contingent.” (Ghani, 1960, 182-183). Bēdil says:

تنزه چراغ شبستان او

تقدس بهار گلستان او

خموشی به بزمش ترنم بیان

تحیر به گلزار او گلفشان

نه غم نی طرب نی خزاں نی بهار

نه کیفیت نه رنج خمار

نی و نغمه و مطرب داستان پس پرده ساز وحدت نہاں (Ghani,1960,182)

*Transcendence was a lamp of His chamber,
Sanctity was blossom of His garden,
Silence breathed a melodious song in His assembly, and
Bewilderment strewed flowers in His orchard.
There was neither sorrow, nor joy and neither autumn nor spring.
Similarly there was neither exhilaration produced by wine
Nor the pain of drunken headache.
The flute, the melody and heart-ravishing minstrel,
Were all hidden behind the curtain of the instrument of Unity?*

The above mentioned verses describe the pre eternal aspects of God, the Absolute; before the beginning, behind the veil of Unity, the Absolute is all alone in the realm of eternal peace, purity and incompatibility where myriad personage feelings and even relative space-time continuum don't exist. The Absolute, in the plane of transcendence, is precisely 'the One' who transcends all ontological relations and conditions of worldly life. In other words, this realm is unknown for the cognitive structure of the human mind. That is why the essential nature of the Absolute remains forever unknowable. So the Absolute Being, from the supreme transcendence, utmost silence and bewilderment, "marked its first approach to manifestation in Ahadiyya (احدیت) i.e. Absolute Oneness. After this, Pure Being descended to Wahidiyya (وحدت) i.e. Unity in Plurality, and then the attributes, the contingent, the intelligences, the spirits, the heavens, the elements, and three kingdoms appeared." (Ghani, 1960, 183). Using the metaphor of long feminine hairs, Bēdil expresses this ontological process of Divine Emanation figuratively in the following verse:

فہمیدنی است نشونمای تنزلت
یعنی چو موی سر بہ تہ پارسیدہ ای (Siddiqui,1999,32)

*Understand this
The growth of 'ontological descent'
Is like the growth of [feminine] hairs
They are long enough to exist both from head to toe simultaneously.*

The ontological 'descent (Nuzūl) of the Absolute towards the lower levels of Being tells about God's interactive relation with His creation and bringing into existence the universe. This long process begins from the eternal archetypes (a'yan thābitāh), the essences that do not change, followed by the ten thousand things, upon reaching the last stage of the descending stage, the possible beings. It is important to note that the whole emanative process of Descent is conceptual and descriptive to understand the stations of Divine Reality before and after the Divine command of "Kun" (Be!). In Sufi discourse, there are six stations (Tanazzulāt): Aḥadīyah (The One), Waḥidīyah (Unity), Arwaḥ (Spirit), Amthāl (Forms), Ajsām (Bodies) and Insān (Human). The first four stations are supra-temporal and super-

special, and the last two stations belong to the physical world. Here lies the most important point regarding this emanative process of creation that the Absolute remains the same, He remain as is in all six stations i.e. He is, at once, at all stations in both transcendent and self-disclosure modes and Bēdil's depiction of ontological Descent in the verse, at once, aesthetically fulfilling and rationally justifiable.

Bēdil believes that the concept (of every entity) in the world is an image of thought (Naqsh) in the Divine Mind. And every image of thought is a word through which every entity communicates. He portrays his unique imagination about the ontological origin of everything in the following hemistich:

"پر نقشی که می بینی حرفیست که می شنوی" (Khwaja,1961,70)

"Whatever you see is a word that you hear."

Entities of this world share their attributes with us by themselves while every attribute is a particular feature of the Divine Knowledge in the act of self-manifestation. In other words, infinite things of the world are the Divine act of creation which is "the manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes of God. When a Name, i.e. a word, is the origin of everything, Bēdil holds, whatever we see is a word that we hear. The essences of all things are eternally known to God, and His creative word (*Kun* "Be") actualizes their existence. Thus creation depends on Divine Knowledge." (Ghani,1960,254-255) and created things of the world are vivid images of wonder that speak through our heart and mind.

The emanative process of creation continues in countless forms of life. Bēdil describes the nature of the world of multiplicity with the cosmic principle of change; every entity in the universe is continuously creating its new and fresh forms and completing the evolutionary stages of life. Bēdil says.

در کارگه تجدید یکبست چمن سازبست

تقویم بهار این جان پارینه نمی باشد (Khwaja.1961,254)

In the world of novelty whatever is to become, it is an ever-renewed creation.

Ever-fresh spring is making an order in this garden (world) and it never passes.

The principle of "perpetual creation" (Khalq-I jadīd) is continuously creating both internal and external forms of life and "the expression must not be taken in the sense of a 'new' creation to be contrasted with the 'old' and earlier, creation of the world. The word 'new' (jadīd) in this context means 'ever new or renewed from moment to moment'. The 'new creation' means, in short, the process of everlasting and ever new act of creation." (Toshihiko, 1983, 205.) The nature of the universe cannot be interpreted without understanding the nature of time. The stability of the universe is based on the peaceful continuation of time which expresses itself in three periods: past, present and future. Bēdil considers the universe as an act and event of Divine Unity (Wāqī'a waḥīda) (Khwaja, 1961) and in this very reality, there exists only one period of time and that is present. Universe is 'singular reality' having a timeless present called 'Imroz'. Bēdil emphasizes the consistent existence and indivisibility of time in the following verses translated by Iqbāl:

غبار ماضی و مستقبل از حال تو می خیزد

در امروز ست گم گر واشکافی دی و فردا را (Iqbal,2017,28)

The mist of past and future rises up from your present;

Subject your tomorrow and yesterday,

To a searching analysis, and you will find them lost today.

Similarly the future will become reality when it enters the present. In other words, there is no tomorrow; when tomorrow comes, it is always 'now'. Bēdil portrays this here:

بر چه آنجاست چو آنجا رسی اینجا گردد

چه خیال است که امروز تو فردا گردد (Iqbal,2017,29)

What is there becomes here when you reach it;

Likewise your today disguises itself in the form of tomorrow.

Bēdil considers the timeless present (Imroz) as the sole reality of time. Past and future are relative to the present, and both are dependable and unrealistic as compared to present as both drive their meaning from present. So Real time, according to Bēdil, is a continuous flow of life and beyond presence there is nothing substantial and authentic.

In the last, the nature of human self, world and time leads him to intuitively realize the ultimate nature of Reality and Existence.

Bēdil's mystical vision of Reality is strongly influenced by Sufi metaphysics of Ibn 'Arabī. By following his doctrine of waḥdat al-wujūd "the oneness of being," (Chittick, 1989, Vol VII, 664-670) Bēdil asserts that "God alone exists and the world as such is nominal and unreal. The world as well as everything else that exists has a relative existence." (Ghani, 1960,246) He says:

که جهان نیست جز تجلی دوست

این من و ما همه اضافت اوست (Ghani,1960,246)

That the world is nothing except the Divine self-disclosure.

Here and now (in this world), We, I and others, all have a relative existence.

Bēdil in this verse says that God is Absolute Reality and the whole of Creation is the theophany (tajallī) of His Names and Qualities. God is absolute means that all otherness and relationality are excluded from Him. There is no reality but the Divine Reality. God is the only abiding Reality, beyond all becoming and relativity. (Hossein Nasr,2017,4). On the other hand, the existence of this world - the cosmos (al-'ālam, defined as "everything other than God") - is entirely dependent on God, the Absolute Being (wojūd). This world as well as our existence is possible only when considered in ontological relation with God as the Absolute Divine Reality, so the universe, as well as everything else that it contains, has a relative existence, i.e. these things exist only in names and not in reality (Ghani,1960,245). God as the Absolute has two basic ontological aspects: pure transcendence (tanzīh) and immanence (tashbīh).

God is transcendent and immanent at the same time i.e. "He is transcendent from the Realm of material world and immanent within it simultaneously. In the innermost ontological dimension of Aḥādīyat "Exclusive-Unity - the Oneness that excludes multiplicity", He is beyond all determinations and in outer dimension of waḥīdīyat "Inclusive-Unity which

embraces all ontological possibilities of manifestation" (Kovacs,2013,91) and as the sole origin of everything that exists in the universe. In the epilogue of Masnavi *Irfan*, Bēdil speaks about the transcendence of God in this way:

او نه باغ و نه گل نه رنگ و نه بو ست

هر قدر او کنی تصور او ست

قرب تحقیق او مجال تو نیست

غیر او گفتن احتمال تو نیست

تا کجا حرف کبریا گوئیم

سخت دوریم تا کجا گوئیم (Ghani,1960,215)

He is neither the garden nor the rose, nor the odor.

Whatever is pointed to be 'He' is but His conception?

It is impossible for you to come nearer to comprehending Him, and

It is not possible for you to call Him except by the pronoun He.

How long should I speak about the Almighty?

We are far away, how should we speak?

Nothing in this world can be presented to be like God. In the realm of pure transcendence, it is the incapacity of human language and human reason to grasp God as Absolute Being in totality (Wujūd-i-Mut'liq). There is difference between entity and the conception of entity as the former refers to ontologically self-sufficient existence while the latter is merely the cognitive formation of the former. Same is the case with God as the self-sustained Being whose existential experience is beyond the reach of human rationality. So human speech has no access to the realm of transcendent Unity. In other words, these verses describe God, "the Absolute in its unconditional transcendence and essential isolation which cannot be an object of human knowledge and cognition.

It is something unknown and unknowable. It is forever a mystery, the Mystery of mysteries." (Toshihiko, 1984, 23). In monotheistic expression, God, in essence, is categorically impossible to imagine and detached.

Besides transcendence, the other ontological aspect is Divine immanence; everything in totality - macrocosmic and microcosmic - is nothing but Divine Presence or the ontological plane of the Divine Names and attributes. Bēdil describes:

آنچه بینی سواد نامه او است

هر چه گوئی صریر خامه او است (Siddiqui,2014,7)

Whatever you see, it is the light of God's book.

Whatever anyone speaks it is His scratching sound (of a pen)

The sensible world is illuminated by knowledge of Divine Names working throughout the universe. Man, in the realm of Divine self-manifestation, is gifted with

language (speech) and text (writing) is nothing but Divine blessing. It means that "the Divine is present in all its manifestations, and in reality all manifestations are a stage of the Divine Presence." (Nasr,2017,4) so anyone, being in the world, human person and the others, see and speak through the visible manifestation of God and His sacred names.

The ethical outcome of Bēdil's metaphysical worldview is beautifully narrated by the renowned poet and scholar Majnu Gorakhpuri (1904-1988), he writes, "By studying the great work (both prose and poetry) of Bēdil in detail, a lesson is ascertained that 'the growth and training of art is not possible without moral edification.'" (Siddiqui,1999,52). The foremost objective of Bēdil was to develop purity and nobility in the conduct of the soul and to elevate the level of consciousness. The subject matter of ethics and moral character is to differentiate between good and bad/evil. Bēdil set a high standard for normative discourse; he rejected fear and greed and considered 'compassion and humility' as one of the fundamental values for the growth of self. He says:

هر چه از دست من آمد بیدل

بمہ بی رغبتی و نفرت کردم (Siddiqui,1999,52)

Whatever I did with my intention and action.

I did without greed and hatred.

In a Ghazal, he preached moral teachings and said, "Be humble whatever high rank and post of honor you achieve, do not leave humility.

Do not be stone-hearted or merciless, rather be delicate like the color of spring. If you free yourself from vested Interests and remain busy in fulfilling your petty desires, this world will always overflow with dust of sadness. Come out from the goal of ego and conquer the world with Self-emancipation."(Siddiqui, 1999,71-72).

Conclusion

Philosophically, Sukhan is the foremost idea of Bēdil's philosophy of life or conception of the world. Being the fundamental state of existence and essence of human interaction, Sukhan is dealing with the necessary quality of language i.e. representation of meaning.

As far as the nature of relation between word and meaning is concerned, Bēdil asserts that the meaning is real but the true meaning is not traceable, because they are free from determination. Meaning as such is not carried by any word and the understanding of meaning depends on the interpretation of the reader. So the determination of a certain meaning cannot be established. Though indeterminate, yet meaning should be delighting for senses, exciting for intellect and admiring for emotions. In other words, beautification of meaning in linguistic expression or words is necessary for the creative experience of a poet.

Meaning of life and the world can be derived from reason (or rationality) as the basic source of knowledge but the ultimate nature of things can only be revealed through intuition as the real source of knowledge. Bēdil believes in the harmonious relation of reason (differentiation and discernment) and intuition (imagination and identity) for realizing the ultimate nature of self, universe and Divine knowledge of Reality.

Human self, in essence, is a transcendent substance. The intuitive realization of selflessness helps to discover the essential nature of human self and Divine attributes of Real self (God).

Cosmologically, the ultimate nature of the universe is spiritual and the whole process of creation is Divine emanation. Divine Knowledge as an act of manifestation actualizes the whole scheme of existence through different emanative stages and this process of creative evolution continues in countless forms of life. Universe is an integrated whole in which time is a continuous progress of existence, a ceaseless and indefinitely indivisible flow of events.

Ontologically, Reality is Divine transcendence and Divine immanence at the same time. In essence, it is incomparable with creation (Tanzīh), and in Its Self-disclosure mode, creation is the manifestation of Divine names and attributes (Tašbīh) and both aspects of Reality complement each other.

Bēdil asserts that the world is not similar to or identical with God. Instead we, human beings, cannot touch the scent of God in totality. Hence the essential identity of God, ontologically, is neither possible nor accessible. Bēdil, as the deeper confidant of reality, expresses the tragic sense of life in the metaphor of spring and describes, if the season of spring is not enough to see the face of blossom flower, how can we experience and realize the spectacles of Divine Essence in this shortest life which is like the blink of eyes or the blossom of spring. Bēdil asserts the inaccessibility of the Reality and describes this existential restlessness and perplexity in the following lines:

بمہ عمر با تو قدح زدیم و نرفت رنج خمار ما

چه قیامتی کہ نمی رسی ز کنار ما بکنار ما (Hadi,1982,169)

The whole life

We drank from the same cup

But the hangover of intoxication

Has never left me.

Curse be on his apocalypse!

You were near

As well as not so near.

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