These Issues of Mysticism, This Exposition of Yours, Ghalib

Examining the elements of Advaitvaad (Monism) in Mirza Ghalib's poetry

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Abstract

In the eighth-ninth century, Shankaraachaarya gave the principle of monism. This doctrine is also called Vedaanta. According to this belief, Brahma is the only truth and this visible world is false and most importantly that Jeev (Aatmaa), the soul and Brahm (Paramaatmaa), the Supreme Power, are one and there is no difference between them. It is also said in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 'Aham Brahmaasmi' that means I am Brahma. That is, the soul is Brahma (the supreme power). Advaita not only says that the soul (Jeev) is a part of the Supreme Soul (Paramaatmaa), or a particle is a bit or piece of the universe, but it also believes that this world is false.

If we examine Ghalib's religious views expressed in his poetry, we find that he believed in monotheism. Ghalib says that everyone accepts that You (Allah) are one, unique and that no one can match you or face you. Ghalib is a strong advocate of Tauhiid, the belief that God is only one and unique. He is against the belief of Shirk, (polytheism). He favored mutual communion among all sects. He has said that we are believers of one God and our tendency is to give up the bonded...
customs and rituals. Ghalib also believed in the idea of unity of Aatmaa and Paramaatmaa, Jeev and Brahma or the micro and the macro. This belief is evident in his countless Shers. He says that though you are in everything in the world, you are still different and unique. In a Sher he says that every drop is saying that I am the ocean, in the same way we also belong to Him (He and us are the same). Ghalib has also pointed out the absurdity (uselessness) of this meaningless world in many of his Shers. Ghalib considers life or existence as a hoax and this world as a web of imagination and believes that even though people say that there is existence but it is not there.

Key words

A person’s being a Muslim or a Kaafir (a non-believer) is mutually exclusive. But if a person is both a Muslim and a Kaafir at the same time, it may seem a bit strange. This paradox is not surprising in the case of a personality like Ghalib. Ghalib himself has said that I have never given up alcohol and never kept Rozaa (Month long fast during the holy month of Ramzan), therefore I am not a Muslim, but am a Kaafir. On the other hand he also says that if I was not a drunkard, I would have been called a Valii (Saint) considering my exposition on the issues related to mysticism and religion -

yeh masaail-e-tasavvuf yeh teraa bayaan Ghalib

tujhe ham valii samajhte jo na baada-khvaar hotaa 1

Ghalib was not a philosopher. But through his poetry, he was presenting his own idea or philosophy. In his Persian collection ‘Kulliyaat-e-Ghalib’ he has said that if the hobby of poetry was the law of land, then the fame of my poetry would have been as high as that of Parveen Nakshatra (Pleiades) and if poetry was a religion, then this book of mine would be a religious one - a Gospel or a revealed one.
If we examine Ghalib’s religious views expressed in his poetry, we find that he believed in monotheism, the basic belief of Islaam. The demonstration of this belief of his is found in many of his Shers. In a Sher, he says that no one can see him (God), he is one in himself, there can be no other like him:

*use kaun dekh saktaa ki yagaanaa hai vo yaktaa*

*jo duii kii boo bhi hotii to kahiin do chaar hotaa*

Ghalib says that everyone accepts that you (Allah) are one, unique and that no one can match you or face you:

*sab ko maqbool hai daavaa tiri yaktaaee kaa*

*roobaroo koi but-e-aaina-siimaa na huaa*

Ghalib appears to be in favor of Tauhiid, the belief that God is only one and unique. He is against the belief of Shirk, that is, polytheism or paganism. He argues that embellishment of singular into plural is a false form of worship. These imaginary fetishes or idols have made me a disbeliever a Kaafir -
Ghalib was an advocate of mutual communion among all sects. He says we are believers of one God and our tendency is to give up the obsolete customs and rituals.

Literature is considered to be a mirror of the cultural and social beliefs of its time. And changes in those beliefs are reflected in the literature of the time. As a result of the influence of Sufism and its replication from Hindustani culture, some of Ghalib’s predecessors and contemporary poets (Valii Dakhinii, Saudaa, Miir and Zauk etc.) took a syncretic approach by attacking the radical ideas. Rejecting the symbols and ostentation, Valii says that if freedom is wanted, then freedom from the bondage of Subhaa (the rosary used by Muslims) and Zunnaar (Janeoo- the Hindu sacred thread) is necessary.

Saudaa believes that God is present everywhere, temples and mosques are nothing but bricks and stones.
Look at the following *Sher* of Saudaa. How interestingly he describes the omnipresence of God through this simile of *Krishna* -

\[
\text{Nahiin hai ghar koi aisaa jahaan us ko na dekhaa ho}
\]

\[
\text{Kanhaiyaa se nahiin kuchh kam sanam meraa vo harjaaii 6}
\]

Zauq, taking a jibe at the established beliefs, said -

\[
\text{Zauq jo madarson ke bigde hue hain mulla}
\]

\[
\text{Unko maikhaane mein le aao sanwar jaayeinge 7}
\]

while advocating equality and coordination, *Miir* says-

\[
\text{Uske farogh-e-husn se jhamke hai sab mein noor}
\]

\[
\text{Shama-e-haram ho yaa ki diyaa somnaat kaa 8}
\]

At that time, the poets were not only talking about mutual reconciliation, but adopting a rebellious attitude, and were also getting attracted towards the things of other religions which they found acceptable. *Miir* had even taken the risk of *Fatwa* of *Kufr* and said that I have left *Islaam* way back and sat in the temple sporting a *Qashqa* (Tilak) -

\[
\text{Miir ke diin-o-mazhab ko ab poochhte kya ho un ne to}
\]

\[
\text{Qashqaa khiinchaa dair mein baithaa kab kaa tark islaam kiyaa 9}
\]
Or he says -

*aaye hain Miir kaafir ho kar khudaa ke ghar mein*

*peshaanii par hai qashqaa zunnar hai kamar mein 10*

No wonder that even *Ghalib* could not remain unaffected by all this. *Ghalib* also accepts that faith and belief are the true criteria for *Braahmins* and *Sheikhs* rather than symbols like *Zunnaar (Janeu)* and *Subhaa (Islamic rosary).*

*nahiin kuchh subhaa-o-zunnaar ke phande mein giiraaii*

*Vafaadaarii mein shaikh-o-barhaman kī aazmaaish hai*

*Ghalib* believed that the sustenance or permanence of faith is the primary condition in religion.

*Vafaadaarii ba shart-e ustuaarii  asl-e iimaan hai*

*mare but-khaane mein to kaabe mein  gaado barahman ko*

*Ghalib* goes rather even further and suggests a way to break *Islamic symbols of rosary* of a hundred beads and wear the *Hindu* sacred thread -

*zunnaar baandh subhaa-e-sad-daanaa tod daal*

*rahrat chale hai raah ko hamvaar dekh kar*

In this *Sher, Ghalib* is not only telling the difference between physical forms of the *Tasbeeh* and the thread (just as the shape of the beads of a rosary is bumpy and fluctuating and the shape of the thread is straight), in this manner probably he is suggesting the latter path being flat and easy as well.

In the eighth-ninth century, *Shankaraachaarya* gave the principle of monism. This doctrine is also called *Vedaanta* or *Advaitvaad.* According to this belief, *Brahma* is the only truth and this visible world is false and most importantly that *Jeev (Atmaa)* and *Brahm (Paramaatmaa)* are one and there is no
difference between them. There is a saying in *Brihadaaranyaka Upanishad*, - ‘Aham Brahmaasmi’ that means I am *Brahma*. That is, the soul is *Brahma* (the supreme power).

During this very period, *Hazrat Mansoor* in Iran had said ‘An-al-Haq’. That means, I am the truth. This statement of *Mansoor* was seen as his claim to be God and he was eventually crucified. *Shankaraachaarya* also had to face a lot of opposition during his time.

In the *Bhakti* period too, we find that this belief had begun to be widely recognized. We see shades of it in *Tulsi Daas* also. The following *chaupaai* (quadruped) of *Kishkindhaa Kaand* says that the water of a river becomes still, once it pours into the ocean. Just as the *Jeev* finds eternal rest on attaining oneness or union with *Hari* (God)

\[
\text{Saritaaj jal jal nidhi mahun jaayii},
\]

\[
\text{hohin achal jin jiv hari paayii 11}
\]

*Kabiir* has also advocated the *Advaita* philosophy. Its reflections are also found in many of his works.

\[
\text{jal mein kumbh kumbh mein jal hai baahar bhiitar paanii}
\]

\[
\text{tut kumbh jal jal hii samaanaa yo kath kahai giyaanii 12}
\]

( the Pitcher is in Water and the water is in the Pitcher, the water is inside and outside the Pitcher

The learned Scholars say that if The pitcher broke the water amalgamates with water)

*Ghalib* also believed in the idea of unity of *Aatmaa* and *Paramaatmaa*, *Jeev* and *Brahma* or the micro and the macro. This belief is evident in his countless *Shers*. He says that though you are in everything in the world, you are still different and unique.
Ghalib opines that an eye or the vision that could not identify the ocean in a drop and the whole in a fraction is not a vision but a child's affair.

In a Sher, he says, I am not making any pride or swaggering like Mansoor, but in reality, my drop is in fact an ocean in itself-
He perceives that like the ultimate joy of a drop lies in ending its existence by merging with the ocean, in the same way the soul also has to eventually merge with God.

_Ishrat-e qatraa hai daryaa mein fanaa ho jaanaa_

dard kaa had se guzarnaa hai davaa ho jaanaa

_Advaita_ not only says that the soul (Jeev) is a part of the Supreme Soul (Paramaatmaa), or a particle is a bit or piece of the universe, but it also believes that this world is false. _Ghalib_ has also pointed out the absurdity (uselessness) of this meaningless world in many of his _Shers_. In a _Sher_, he puts this world similar to the invisible waist of a beloved, about which it cannot be said whether it is there or not.

_shaahid-e-hastii-e-mutlaq kii kamar hai aalam_

_log kahte hain ki hai, par hamein manzoor nahiin_

_Ghalib_ considers life or existence as a hoax and this world as a web of imagination and believes that even though people say that there is existence but it is not there

_hastii ke mat fareb mein aa jaiyo asad_

_aalam tamaam halqaa-e-daam-e-khayaal hai_
And -

haan khaaiyo mat fareb-e-hastii

har-chand kahein ki hai, nahī hai

This oneness between Brahma and Jeev is called 'Wahdat-ul-Vujood' in Persian. It means the oneness of existence, that is, all that is there is only one, the supreme. Similarly 'Wahdat-ul-Shuhood' means all that is visible is only one. However, there has been opposition to this belief. According to another belief, 'La-Mauzood-al-Allah' means there is no one present other than Allah. That is, all that is there is Allah. This is a point where there is no difference between Shuhood (act of seeing/witnessing), Shaahid (Seer/witness) and Mashhood (Seen/witnessed).-

asl-e-shuhood-o-shaahid-o-mashhood ek hai
hairaani hoon phir mushaahidaa hai kis hisaab mein

For Ghalib, the gap between Bandgii (being a worshiper) and Khudaaii (being God) seems to have been bridged. He says "Jise too bandgii kahta hai, daavaa hai Khudaii kaa" (what you call worship is in fact an assertion of being God). He is entangled in seeing himself even when in worship. "Bandagii mein bhi vo Azaadaa-o-Khud biin Hain". See the following Sher-

niyaaz pardaa-e-izhaar-e-khud-parastii hai
jabin-e-sijdaa-fishaan tujh se aastaan tujh se
Reading the first Misraa (1st line), it seems that Ghalib is referring to God-worship as a means of covering up self-worship, that is, giving Khud (himself or Adam) a status equal to that of Khudaa (God). But Misraa-e-Sanii (2nd line) of the Sher unravels the layers of the meaning of the Sher very clearly. Here, Ghalib says that the jabiin (forehead) that is bowed to you is from you only (it is you only), the doorsill on which the forehead is bowed is also yours (you only). Then how can we consider Masjood (to whom one bows) and Sajid (the one who bows) to be different from each other? The worshiper is actually a part of the one who is worshiped. That way, the worshiper is worshiping himself. Therefore this Niyaaz (worship) is only an attempt to cover up this Khud-Parastii (self-worship) so that the worshiped and the worshiper, who are actually one, may appear different.

It is a very difficult task to take up one aspect for consideration from such a vast and elaborate Kalaam (Poetry) of Ghalib. Much has been written and much can be written on monism and its associated aspects with the reference of Ghalib. But in view of my limitations and limitations of writing as a whole, I wrap my point with this Sher-

varaq tamaam huaa aur madh baaqii hai
safiinaa chaahiye is bahr-e-be-karaan ke liye

(the page has come to an end, yet the praise remains

a sail-boat is needed for this boundless ocean)
4. [https://poetrylearner.com/poetry/14833/%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A6-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%B9%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%98%E0%A4%A1%E0%A4%BC%E0%A5%80-%E0%A4%89%E0%A4%B8-%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE](https://poetrylearner.com/poetry/14833/%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%A6-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%B0%E0%A4%A8%E0%A4%BE-%E0%A4%B9%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%98%E0%A4%A1%E0%A4%BC%E0%A5%80-%E0%A4%89%E0%A4%B8-%E0%A4%AF%E0%A4%BE%E0%A4%B0-%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE)
9. Ibid pp 14