



The Femininity of Mysticism: A Reflection on Rouzbahan Baghli's *Kashf-al-Asrar*

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Abstract

The history of thought associates man with goodness, reason, law, order, and religion; on the other hand, it regards woman as the 'other' and associates her with evil, contravention, defiance, and mysticism. In accordance with the common grounds between mysticism and femininity such as defiance, linear reasoning, and uniaxial discourse, as well as concepts such as life's essential femininity, love's dependence on the soul, creativity and creative ability of women, and the constant presence of women in religion, the present article reflects on Rouzbahan Baghli's *Kashf-al-Asrar* to showcase how Rouzbahan's lived experience and aestheticism creates a carnal and feminine dimension. This study claims that through anthropomorphism and the mystical conceptualisation of beauty, the central/conceptual metaphor of the 'bride' creates a metaphorical system which presents a unification of beauty, femininity, and carnality. This metaphor serves as Rouzbahan's mystical centrality in conceptualising the truth, the prophet, the angels, the creator, and himself.

Keywords: Mysticism, Critical Writing, Bride Metaphor, Rouzbahan, *Kashf-al-Asrar*, Femininity

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The history of thought associates man with goodness, reason, law, order, and religion; on the other hand, it regards woman as the 'other' and associates her with evil, contravention, defiance, and mysticism. In accordance with the common grounds between mysticism and femininity such as defiance, linear

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reasoning, and uniaxial discourse, as well as concepts such as life's essential femininity, love's dependence on the soul, creativity and creative ability of women, and the constant presence of women in religion, the present article reflects on Rouzbahan Baghli's *Kashf-al-Asrar* to showcase how Rouzbahan's lived experience and aestheticism creates a carnal and feminine dimension.

2. Methodology

For Abrahamic religions and Islamic mysticism, anthropomorphism is a key characteristic which emphatically conceptualises carnality. The anthropomorphisation of God, concepts, images, and carnal metaphors play a central role in the worldview of mystics such as Ibn-Arabi and Rouzbahan. In accordance with Rouzbahan's lived experience, this study traces and analyses his imagery of the experiences and the sublime through the feminine and carnal metaphors of a female beloved. It illustrates the process by which his carnal mystic experiences are translated into an aesthetic anthropomorphisation of God.

3. Theoretical Framework

The linguistic turmoil in philosophy opened new areas in divinity, linguistic philosophy, and scripture studies. Just as it is only the language that is capable of transforming events into experiences, one must employ language to think about God. Through manipulating the language and employing its metaphorical capabilities, the mystic conveys his paradoxical, provocative, lamentable, and incarnated experiences. As a result of this expression, this study investigates two points concerning the mystic ecriture: the emergence of mysticism as protest literature and the unification of mystical experiences and the entanglement of mystical language and carnality and carnal metaphors. Mysticism, in its pure form, possesses a meaningful correlation with femininity, which is represented through carnal metaphors and imagery. A feminine dimension and a carnal reading of mysticism becomes possible through life's essential femininity, the similarities between women's fertility and the Creation, the connection of mysticism with delight, which is essentially a feminine characteristic, and the women-love entanglement. In mysticism, women are more potent than men; this, in turn, renders them more vulnerable to corruption. Her carnal boundaries are not clear and her physical life is more intertwined with the afterlife than her male counterpart.

4. Discussion and Analysis

The Femininity of mysticism is in no case an account of mystic femininity, mystical women and their experiences, or their language; on the contrary, just as men's association with religion, law, order, and authority represents the

masculinity of religion, the convergence of mysticism and femininity in notions such as love, insanity, beauty, creation, carnality, secrecy, and defiance represents the feminine dimension of mysticism. The extreme case of such femininity is present in Ibn-Arabi's thought which regards women and the feminine dimension as the absolute enjoyment and love of the divine. There has always been a woman associated with the divine, the king, the philosopher, etc. Plato's Sophia, Zoroastrian's Daēnā, Judaism's Shekhinah, Dante's Beatrice, Christianity's Mary, Jung's Anima, and the mystic's Rabiya. Terminologies such as marriage and spiritual care, creative femininity, feminine words, God's brides, and holy marriage illustrate the carnality and anthropomorphism of mystical experiences as well as their different feminine dimensions. As an unconventional, disobedient, and bold mystic, Rouzbahan explores the femininity of mysticism and all its multiplicities such as linguistic rebellion, carnal metaphors, feminine mystical and lived experiences, his own aestheticism, and his inheritance from Mansour Hallaj and Ibn-Arabi's line of thought. The guise-love-beauty triad is the life force of his experiences. Of note here is that he views nothing but beauty in this dimension. For him, love's comprehension and enjoyment can only be possible through the anthropomorphisation of experiences and carnal dimensions. In *Kashf-al-Asrar*, the conceptual metaphor of the bride produces a unified system of metaphors which entails in itself other metaphors such as the angel/Gabriel, prophet, Creator, Creation, and Rouzbahan himself.

5. Conclusion

Rouzbahan's lifeworld, aestheticism, and the canon of the women-love-beauty triad illustrate some noteworthy points: in anthropomorphising the Creator, the woman is the best/only medium; the central metaphor of the bride and its system of implications anthropomorphise and carnalise the experiences which in turn represent beauty and femininity.

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