THE SPIRITUAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACY OF ABDULQADIR BEDIL: LANGUAGE, MEANING, AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract:
This paper delves into the life and philosophical contributions of Abdulqadir Bedil, a prominent Persian poet, writer, and philosopher whose works continue to shape literary and philosophical discourse. His focus on human spirituality and consciousness, intertwined with his unique interpretations of Persian, Indian, and Islamic thought, created a profound legacy that has inspired scholars and artists for centuries. The paper explores Bedil's early influences, including his exposure to Sufism and Hindu philosophy, and how these elements shaped his literary output. Special attention is given to his concept of "Sukhan" (speech or language) and its role in his philosophical exploration of the human soul, nature, and the universe. The paper also examines the philosophical roots of Bedil's ideas in Indian texts such as the "Upanishads" and "Mahabharata" and their reinterpretation within Bedil's context. Through empirical analysis and literary examination, the paper highlights how Bedil's approach to meaning and language parallels postmodern linguistic theory, emphasizing the fluid and evolving nature of meaning.

Keywords: Abdulqadir Bedil, Persian Poetry, Indian Philosophy, Sufism, spiritual perfection.

Introduction

Bedil's philosophical views and literary style were of great significance in his time, shaping the spirit of enlightenment in literature through his special focus on human spirituality and consciousness. His creative legacy is so rich and profound that it continues to serve as an important source for scientific research and analysis to this day. Bedil's life, work, and philosophical perspectives represent a spiritual treasure of universal importance for various nations and cultures. Abdulqadir Bedil, as a great poet, writer, and philosopher, gained worldwide recognition. He illuminated the torch of Persian literature and science in the land of India. In later centuries, his contemporaries honored him with the title "Abulma'ani," meaning "The Father of Meanings." In his work, Bedil analyzed significant elements of the literary art and creative output of Persian-Tajik poets, ranging from Rudaki to Jami. He also conducted deep research into the literary and philosophical views of poets such as Sanai, Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Ibn Arabi. The ancient philosophy of Iran, along with Greek and Indian sciences, laid the foundation for the development of his literary-philosophical thoughts, which were strengthened through the assimilation of past heritage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bedil's ancestors hailed from the Samarkand region, and they migrated to India during the bloody period of the Safavid rule. Bedil's family belonged to the Sepah tribe, and according to Sadriddin

Ayni, the addition of the title "Mirza" to Bedil and his relatives' names is proof of one of his ancestors being a great military leader.

Bedil himself stated that his language was Persian. He was born in Azimabad and lost his father at a young age. Raised by his literate mother, Bedil began his education at the age of 5-6. By the age of 7, he had memorized the Qur'an, and by 10, he was studying Arabic grammar, Persian poetry, and prose. After his father's death, Bedil was raised by his uncle, Mirza Qalandar. Under his uncle's influence, Bedil left school, as Mirza Qalandar believed that the education in religious schools limited intellectual growth and hindered the development of true talent. Bedil then began independent learning. He studied Sufism under Sheikh Kamol, and the exegesis, hadith, and Arabic literature with his uncle, Mirza Zarif.

Mirza Qalandar's views played a significant role in shaping Bedil's thinking. Various religious and philosophical representatives, scholars, and thinkers participated in his gatherings, and Bedil considered them his spiritual teachers. Bedil's literary and philosophical views were influenced by both Islamic and Indian sources.

Between the ages of 12 and 16, Bedil's interest in theology and various religious sects grew stronger. At the age of 17, he traveled to the Udesa region in southern India with his uncle, Mirza Zarif, where he met the famous scholar Shah Qosim-i-Huwallah and studied under him for three years. It was during this period that Bedil began writing poetry. Following the death of his uncle and Mirza Qalandar, Bedil embarked on an independent path at the age of 21 and moved to Delhi, where he encountered a mystic named Shah Kobul, a man of the Indian faith. Bedil also became interested in mysticism.

Shah Kobuli's practices in hypnosis (the science of magic) and sorcery greatly intrigued Bedil. After undergoing several "spiritual trials," these experiences prompted him to study the secrets of this science. Though Bedil used elements of magic in his creative works, he evaluated Shah Kobuli's primary views on the "dream world" as insufficient and opposed them with his own philosophy, based on "consciousness".

At the age of 25, Bedil married and, in order to provide for his family, briefly continued his father's military profession at the court of Azam Shah. However, his loyalty to the king did not align with his free-spirited and idealistic nature. When the king requested Bedil to write a poem in his honor, Bedil refused, choosing to leave the royal service.

After leaving the military, Bedil went to Akbarabad (Agra), where he participated in literary gatherings and met poets and scholars such as Zuhuri and Izzat. He also befriended the ruler and poetry enthusiast Mir-i-Komgor. This period marked a new stage in Bedil's intellectual development. He began to reassess the knowledge he had gained from Indian and Islamic sources through the lens of reason, developing a new worldview. However, his doctrinal views led to conflicts with other literary and academic circles, causing him to leave Akbarabad and return to Delhi.

Delhi, however, was not a peaceful place during the reign of Aurangzeb. The political situation in the capital became tense. Following the advice of his friends, Bedil fled to Lahore for protection during this turbulent time. His "mystic" state during this period served as a mask for protection from the political turmoil of the era.

METHODOLOGY & EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

During this period, Bedil met and grew close to one of the most famous scholars and poets of his time, Shukrullohon Nawwab. With his support, Bedil traveled across cities like Lahore, Kashmir, Multan, and Sirhind, engaging in scholarly and literary discussions with Muslim and Hindu scholars, poets, and intellectuals. These interactions served as a new school for Bedil, aligning with his philosophical and creative worldview.

In Lahore, Bedil studied famous philosophical texts from India that had been translated into Persian during the Doroshukuh era, such as the "Upanishads" and "Mahabharata" until 1696 was spent traveling various cities of India with Shukrullohon.

After Shukrullohon was called to Delhi by Aurangzeb and appointed to a high position, Bedil moved to Delhi as well, where he spent the rest of his life.

Bedil lived and worked in a complex political and economic environment, witnessing the reigns of 11 kings during his 77 years. As a prolific writer and philosopher, he left behind a rich creative legacy. His works include 65,000 verses of poetry and around 50 prose works, which were compiled in the 1882 "Kulliyat" collection published in Bombay. This cincludes works like "Debocha", "Irfon", "Turi Ma'rifat", "Nukat", "Ishorat va Hikoyat", "Ruqaat", "Chor Unsur", "Muhi A'zam", "Tilsimi Hayrat", "Ghazaliyat", "Ruboyiat", "Qasaid", "Qittaot", "Tarkibot va Tarjot", and "Tashbehot va Tamsilot". Additionally, his manuscripts are preserved in personal libraries across Central Asia.

Bedil's works cover a wide range of topics. His "Tilsimi Hayrat" (1669), written in masnavi form, consists of 3,750 verses and explores the relationship between the human body and soul. Bedil compares the human soul to a powerful king who governs a realm made of fire, water, and wind after descending from the sacred world. In this work, he presents a unique view on the requirement of knowledge and rejects the philosophical views of his teacher Shah Kobuli, believing that the essence of any ideology is connected to human consciousness and is not rooted in the material world.

Though the wori terminology to describe the spiritual and physical states of a person, Bedil's main educational and moral ideas are clearly expressed. He emphasizes the importance of focusing on human spirituality and true consciousness.

"Muhi A'zam" (1681) is another of Bedil's famous masnavi works, written in the meter of "Shahnameh", and consists of around 4,500 verses. This work includes stories from the life of Sufi figures, with Bedil's philosophical views on the creation of the world conveyed through examples. In this work, Bedil elevates the role and importance of experience in artistic depiction, exploring not only human spirituality but also offering a unique interpretation of the philosophical essence of life and the world.

Bedil's "Turi Ma'rifat" (1687), another masnavi work, contains 1,500 verses and was written in the same style as "Hayrat". It is dedicated to Shukrullohon and describes the rich and vibrant nature of Mount Bayrot in Bengal, drawing parallels between it and the "mountain of knowledge" of Prophet Musa. Bedil compares Bayrot to "Turi Sino"—not as a divine light but as a manifestation of knowledge. This work expresses Bedil's deep connection with nature and spirituality, leaving readers in awe of its artistic portrayal.

RESULTS

Bedil's worldview revolves around the concept of "sukhan" (speech or language). He believed that human identity is intricately tied to the phenomenon of "sukhan," and that freedom and autonomy are realized through it. "Sukhan" has both subjective and objective dimensions: in the objective world, it manifests as speech, text, creative writing, and communication. On the other hand, "sukhan" also exists in a subjective, all-encompassing form. Therefore, everything that exists through sensation, thought, and imagination falls within the realm of "sukhan." Bedil even viewed silence as a form of language.

His linguistic philosophy, centered on "sukhan," led him to search for the meaning of life. He believed that it was impossible to find or discover meaning connected to reality, as meaning cannot be derived from necessity or obligation. Just as one cannot pick a flower and fully understand its essence, meaning cannot be fully captured or understood. To illustrate this point, Shir Ali Khan Ludi recounts an incident in his work "Tazkira-i Mir'at al-Khayal" between Bedil and his contemporary poet Nasir Ali Sirhindi. The two met at Nawab Shukr Allah Khan's literary gathering, where Nasir Ali analyzed the opening line of one of Bedil's ghazals and pointed out a grammatical mistake. He argued that meaning arises from the word itself. Bedil smiled and responded that the meaning attributed to a word is itself just another word. In other words, meaning is never fully grasped through words alone. Bedil compares this idea to understanding the self: no matter how many details and commentaries are provided in books, the true meaning of the self cannot be fully revealed.

This story further highlights Bedil's profound and philosophical views on meaning. His response to Nasir Ali—that the meaning attributed to words is simply another word—reflects the inherent nature of meaning. Similarly, the essence of the self cannot be fully revealed through words, as understanding is dependent on the reader's interpretive approach, or hermeneutics. Therefore, it is impossible to make definitive or final statements about a particular meaning.

Bedil's concept of meaning shares interesting similarities with ancient Indian wisdom and postmodern linguistic theory. Like Ferdinand de Saussure, Bedil emphasizes the importance of signs and their elements of expression, stating, "Nothing is represented without being a sign." According to Bedil, everything begins with meaning and ends with it, and meaning must always be new and original.

His ideas express the fluidity of meaning and its continuous reconstruction through language. Bedil's views highlight that meaning is not absolute but always subject to change, a perspective that aligns with modern understandings of language and interpretation.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, based on the points above, Bedil's philosophical and literary worldview is a complex and profound synthesis that both develops the traditions of Persian poetry and enriches them with new philosophical ideas. His philosophical perspectives on the human soul, nature, and the universe are expressed through poetic imagery that is simple and accessible. Bedil saw spiritual perfection and awareness as one of the most important goals, and he conveyed this through his philosophical, mystical, and literary reflections.

The concept of "Sukhan" holds a central place in Bedil's worldview, as it highlights the infinity of language and meaning and underscores their significance in expressing the relationship between

humans and the world. Bedil consistently emphasized that words and meanings cannot be fully grasped, as they are interconnected and ever-changing. These ideas echo the postmodern literary theories of the fluidity of language and meaning, as well as the hermeneutic approaches to interpretation.
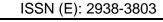
In the study and literary discourse about Bedil's life and work, it is particularly noted that he engaged with many scholars and poets of his time, drawing on their ideas. By studying influential works of Indian philosophy such as the "Upanishads" and the "Mahabharata" Bedil adapted these teachings to his own creative identity and reinterpreted them in a new context.

From a mystical perspective, Bedil delved deeply into the relationship between the human spirit and the material world. He criticized certain doctrines of the Shah Kobuliya Sufi order and proposed philosophical concepts rooted in awareness. As a result, Bedil's works became a source of inspiration for the development of spiritual values and the pursuit of human spiritual perfection.

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