

Investigation of the Manifestations of Poverty in the Honorable Book of Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh and Masnavi Ma'anavi

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Abstract: Poverty is amongst the terms undergone a lot of semantic evolutions in the course of time; it is interpreted and defined differently by the lexicologists, philosophers and theosophists. It has been ranging in meaning from the lowest degrees of disgrace and inferiority to the peak of pride and esteem. There is always raised this question in the mind as to what whether destitution is truly a disgrace or an honor? Why it is sometimes so heinous that it gets the mankind close to blasphemy and occasionally so admired that instigates pride and honor? The most important goal of the present study is finding an answer to the foresaid question based on a search in the honorable book of Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh and Masnavi Ma'anavi though references have also been made to the ideas of the other elders of the canon and conduct in order to better foster the issue. This study also elaborates the positive and negative effects of the material poorness and the reason for the theosophical poverty, as well. This is done based on an analytical-descriptive method along with presentation of the evidence and examples from Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh and Masnavi's Ma'anavi followed by interpretation and clarification of them. **Keywords:** poverty, richness, theosophical and real poverty (evanescence), Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh, Masnavi Ma'anavi.

1. INTRODUCTION

The valuable book of Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh is a collection of the prayers and whispers by the "most beautiful worshipping soul", Imam Sajjad (PBUH). Being known as the bible of Ahl Al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and the sister of the holy Quran, Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh is a set of the educational and ethical teachings and, in the meanwhile, portraying the nicest and the finest amorous petitions before the real God. The book also has a lot of different subjects in political, social, ethical, psychological, philosophical and economic areas.

The goal of the present study is the investigation of the various meanings of poverty and elucidation of the perspectives of Imam Sajjad (PBUH) and the theosophists in this regard as well as the ethical and educational effects of poverty on the human soul as documented in the two ethical-educational books of (Holy Quran, tr. Ghomshe'ei, 2000).

At first, the various meanings of poverty have been investigated as viewed by the Imam as an immaculate person having his words drawn on the revelations; then, the perspectives of the theosophists, especially Mowlavi, will be explored in this regard so that it can become clear that what sort of poverty has detrimental and harmful effects hence should be avoided and what kind of poverty is accompanied by construction and development; it will be also seen that to what extent the theosophists' understanding of poverty is close or far to and from the viewpoint of the immaculate Imam (may Allah hail on him). It is also evaluated if exercising poverty is confirmed and recommended by the elders of canon and conduct or if it is condemned and discouraged?

2. POVERTY

In Arabic terms, poverty and poorness [Faqr] has been interpreted as indigence with its plural forms being Foqūr and Mafaqer. In Persian, as well, it means destitution, indigence and scantiness as an antonym to richness and affluence (Sahifeh Sajjadiyeh, tr. Ansarian, 2015).

Inherent or Probable Poverty:

A creature might be inherently poor. Poverty is amongst the inherent characteristics of the creatures and richness is exclusively the property of the sublime God's quintessence. In His holy words, the God has introduced the human beings with such a trait as poverty:

"O' people, it is you who need the God and (only) the God is needless and extolled". The human beings' existence minus the God is nothing but ineptness, weakness and deficiency; upon getting connected to the endless divine source, the human beings deserve to possess the perfection attributes. The persons well figuring out such needfulness and indigence before the God would submit in the God's presence but the persons considering that all their possessions belong to their own selves and visualize their own selves as needless would incite mutiny.

Poverty of the Soul:

A group feels internal poorness in respect to the other human beings and other material facilities. They always feel an internal need and necessity and such a feeling that stems from their ignorance of the God's generosity and power drags them towards turning their faces away from the God and stretching the hands of needfulness to things other than the God and flattering about all the other inferior servants and this is the worst type of poverty because when an individual seeks help in another creature other than the God for the satisfaction of his or her needs, it is an example of ingratitude. The poverty introduced in the honorable hadith "poverty is very likely to lead to blasphemy" might be of the foresaid type.

Poverty in Facilities:

It is lacking the material facilities as an opposite to affluence in the material facilities. Such a kind of poverty is neither value nor anti-value. It has some useful effects like

the exemption from judgment in the other world and being excused from all the liabilities. On the contrary, richness, as well, has some positive effects like a person's affording of alimony and doing charitable works and so forth.

Poverty in Heart:

The great prophet of Islam (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny the best of His regards) orders that "Al-Faqr, Faqr Al-Qalb" meaning "poverty is actually the poorness of the heart" (Hosseini Shahrudi M. & Farzali, 2012).

The real poverty is the poorness of the heart that crazes for a lot of desires and wishes. An individual's attachment in the heart to the world and negligence of the source of the existence causes him or her to become selfish.

"Selfishness originates from love of the world and ambitions; being nothing and worshipping the God are better" (Sa'adi, 2006).

Real Poverty (Evanescence):

"Seminally, poverty means desertion of the world and whatever the things therein followed by the gradual evanescence in the quintessence of the One God. Thus, poor is the person who has nothing meaning that s/he has given up everything to achieve everything". (Khorramshahi, 1994)

The utterances by His Highness and the interpretations he presents about poverty feature a lot of nicety and fineness provoking contemplation and pondering in the philosophers and theosophists. His highness showcases the vast realm of this concept's meaning against the fastidious thoughts.

Amongst the particular points and niceties found in the words of Imam Sajjad (PBUH) about poverty, the followings can be pointed out:

Poverty, as a Factor of Existential Development:

The immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) had their eyes so steadily on the grace, generosity, endless existence and absolute richness of the God that they saw themselves as purely poor and confessed to their own ignorance, fault, illiteracy and indigence. A human being minus God is a void system and those elders had well discerned this truth and found themselves in debt to and nothing before the God. So, they saw the best prayer in declaring their needfulness of and dependency on the source of existence because the more the human beings enjoy a higher degree of existence, the more they find themselves needful and dependent in the divine court. Thus, Imam Sajjad (PBUH) calls the Eminent God the "Aqnā Al-Aqniā'a" [the richest of the rich] and calls himself "Afqar Al-Afqarā'a" [the poorest of the poor].

The human beings comprehend the intensity of their needfulness of the God to the size of their intellectual growth and it is through this perception that they gain more existential development. This is why His Highness Imam Sajjad (PBUH) demands more poverty from the God and orders that "add to my poverty and needfulness of your sublime self" (Kharazmi, 1987).

1. *Poverty as an Excuse for Entreaty to the Divine Court and a Ground for Acquiring His Mercy:*

The Immaculate Imam (PBUH) humbly and modestly says prayers to the God and starts entreating and petitioning to the divine court with utmost zeal and anguish and humbleness and meekness. The secret of such crying and petitioning can be discerned only through perceiving poverty because his highness finds the human beings minus God as an inept and weak system.

2. *Poverty as the Factor Saving the Human Beings from Depravities and Inferiorities:*

Those who have pulled out the “three-sided thorn” of egoism from inside their existence and reached the virtue of poverty as the depletion of the carnal wishes neither realize anybody as the possessor of properties and power and belongings in the universe to flatter about them nor see themselves as the owners of positions and gifts to be proud of them before the others. They are so lofty in their ambitions and dispositions that they compose the following verse:

“Woe on my ambition for I am poor even if I soak the edge of my cloak in the water of the sun’s spring” (Davudinejad, 1996).

“Poverty encourages the wayfarer to demand perfection for the fact that the Eminent God is the sum or the collection of the perfection and good virtues; being needful of the God causes the wayfarer of the right path to request Him grant him with the maximum possible perfection so that he can be garnished with the characteristics of the absolute goodness”. Such a person is well insightful of his personality’s sublimity and assesses his imperfection with the absolute goodness’s perfection and the rich and needless existence of the God and sees imperfection and needfulness of the creation with sharp-sighted eyes. Therefore, he does not make properties and wealth as means of comfort and pampering. The corporeal possessions from gold and silver to financial and landed properties are desired by the persons who feel shortages in their personalities and intend to conceal their internal flaws and shortfalls via taking possession of the properties and decorating oneself by golden and silvery ornaments (Foruzanfar, 2008).

3. *Material Poverty:*

Being in possession of the material facilities or not is not considered as value or anti-value. It is a divine destiny if poverty is not caused by laziness and indolence and if richness is not attained through improper ways but through proper ways. Being destined to such fates, the poor and the rich each has a responsibility pointed out in the divine ĀYĀT. The poor should be patient, protect their fame and not to request from the other servants; the rich should distribute alms and make endowments and feed the poor (Sabzevari, 1995).

Demanding material poorness has been never mentioned in the hadiths and narrations.

Besides being deprived of such blessings as endowments and visiting of the close relatives and so forth that come about following the accumulation of the wealth, toleration of such a situation and submission to the divine command and not opening the tongue to complaints and consequently safely finishing the path in this oasis are not simple tasks. Thus, His Highness Imam Sajjad (PBUH) seeks refuge in God in many prayers and phrases for being saved from poverty and requests affluence, blessing and widening of sustenance (Sajjadi, 1991).

Poverty is followed by many harms and disadvantages (Seraj Tusi, 2002):

- 1) It is very difficult for the persons who are weak in faith to observe divine piety and avoid perpetration of the forbidden things when being inflicted with severe financial needs. Thus, poverty can set the ground for them to commit various sins, including robbery, murder and so forth.
- 2) The human beings' needfulness of the others causes their deprivation of independence and makes them intellectually dependent. The rich persons with deviations in thoughts and opinions may be navigated by their beliefs towards outside the circle of religion.
- 3) Needfulness of and assertion of need to the other servants may be followed by one's humility and disgrace.
- 4) Indigence, needfulness and hardness of the life conditions might cause complaints of the God and ingratitude and blasphemy.
- 5) Material poorness might cause dissatisfaction of the divine determinism because such a protest causes the human beings' downfall even in its most hidden layers of existence and the lowest weaknesses of the soul; his highness Imam Sajjad (PBUH) asks the God not to afflict him with such a difficult test while it is known that His Highness's life is a testimony to his highness's successful accomplishment and passing of this huge test but it seems as if His Highness is teaching the others that this test is very sensitive and difficult so that they may not request poverty lest their complaint and objection bring them to the verge of the cliff of perish.

Patient Poor, Human Beings with High Prestige:

The individuals coping with poverty would come out as victors and proud persons in this difficult test if they exercise forbearance and be submitted to the God's will. They have such a lofty position that the immaculate Imam (PBUH) asks the God to grant him socialization with them:

3. POVERTY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEOSOPHISTS:

As it was mentioned in the introduction, special attentions have been paid in the oldest Persian prose about mysticism to Masnavi Ma'anavi which is going to be discussed herein. Based on a classification by Abu Nasr Seraj, poverty is the fourth rank amongst the mysticism ranks. As viewed by Attar, poverty is the seventh oasis and synonymous to evanescence (Schimel, 1982).

Poverty in Masnavi:

Mowlavi composed Masnavi when his personality had become complete. Like a compassionate physician, he seeks diagnosing the human beings' internal diseases and curing them. He is also making efforts like a sympathetic teacher to release the human beings from the fences and bottlenecks and guide and lead them to the unification with the God.

In an allegory called "the dervish Arab and the story of the woman", Mowlavi deals with the contrast between material poorness and poverty from theosophical perspectives and concludes that material poorness can be overcome through endeavors whereas the achievement of poverty as a theosophical rank is very difficult and it can be only deservingly attained by the human beings whose inside is decorated with ornaments of meaning; as he opines, such a poverty is not only not an imperfection but also a decoration and ornament (Safa, 1987).

Poverty with the Meaning of Indigence:

In the first mysticism period and due to the disordered economic situation and the mystics' remonstrant seclusion from the politics for the Omavis' tyrannies, poverty is envisioned as an honor and virtuousness and possession of no material belongings is intended by poverty.

Mowlavi, as well, likes such a type of poverty for the wayfarers because, as he states, it causes the cessation of the greedy person's avarice in the human beings followed by their immunization. He presents the story of His Highness Khidr and the piercing of the ship as an allegory to this issue (Ezz Al-Din Kashani, 2008).

Absence of Feeling Attachment in Heart:

Theosophical poorness is not indigence but the desertion of the attachment to all the things except the God as viewed by Mowlavi. To elucidate this concept, he gives a beautiful allegory which is very illustrative; the allegory of water and ship:

"Water can cause the sinking of the ship if it enters it but water can propel the ship and provide the passengers with security and safety when it flows underneath the ship".

As for properties and wealth, the thing that matters is not possessing or not possessing them but feeling attachment in heart to them. If the love of this world finds its way into the human beings' hearts, it would cause perishing of them. But, if the human beings do not become attached in their hearts to the world's gold and silvers and seal the box of their heart with the divine stamp, they can also get close to the God even with the possession of properties and these same belongings enable them to get close to the vicinity of the God and perform good deeds and fulfill prayers. Here, Mowlavi's perspective is found very much matching with the viewpoints of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) and highly influenced by a hadith from the great prophet of Islam (Attar Farid Al-Din Muhammad, 2005).

Real Poverty or Evanescence:

Mowlana begins Masnavi with a discussion about the evanescence in actions because the reed that has started complaining is indeed Mowlana himself who is devoid of his own self as well as others' selves and occupied by the beloved or the very Mighty God; his propeller in the expression of these secrets is his beloved and the poems and euphonious songs coming out of his throat are not from him rather it is the God who talks in his words and bestows inciting tune to his vocal cords (Razi, 2005).

Kamal Al-Din Hussein Kharazmi realizes reed in "Jawāher Al-Asrār" actually as a pen of the Mohammedan existence; the evanescence in actions is still discerned even if his assumption is accepted. Regarding the term "reed" in the first verse in Masnavi, Kharazmi has the following words: "the demanding lover and the honest disciple are commissioned like the perfect sheikh and the supplementing elder to the reading and inform of the primitiveness of the human nature; in a rank of denying the human beings' existence and removing the constraints of egoism, he is like a reed in possession of a throat or like a pen in the hands of a writer who has become the intermediary of education and teaching for its absolute submission in such a way that the masters of clues and guidance translated the honorable ĀYA that "*Egra'a wa Rabboka Al-Akram Al-Lazi Allama Bi Al-Qalam, Allama Al-Insān Mā Lam Ya'alam*" [read and your God is the dearest who teaches by pen, teaches the mankind what he

does not know] as meaning that the Mohammedan existence's pen is the intermediary of the appearance of the hidden secret and the teaching relationship between all the sciences" (Bayranvand et al, 2017).

4. EVANESCENCE AND SURVIVAL IN MASNAVI

Survival after evanescence means that the wayfarer can achieve permanence after perishing his imagined and virtual existence and attributing no action to his own self and unveiling the curtain of the human characteristics from the existence and rendering his own essence disappeared upon witnessing the Sublime God's essence and, in another respect, after reaching the evanescence in actions, features and essence following which his existence will be faded and survived in the God; his actions will become those of the God and he will be characterized by the divine attributes and his essence will become that of the God (Sobhaninejad M. & Elli' ein, 2006).

"Mowlana realizes evanescence as the prelude to the survival. In his mind, having a prestigious personality lies in the deprivation of personality for the reason that the human beings can never achieve a higher actuality as long as they have not stopped the current actuality and the wayfarer cannot be tied to the divine attributes as far as he is characterized by the human traits and he cannot acquire the absolute divine features as long as he has properties making him distinct from the others" (Zarrinkoub, 1991).

Usefulness of Poverty from the Perspective of Mowlavi:

The admirable poverty has advantages for the humans from the perspective of Mowlavi, including becoming worthy of the divine mercy and attention, security, cheerfulness and ability of observing piety (Sepahvandi & Taghizadeh, 2013).

Receiving the Divine Attention and Forgiveness:

Mowlavi realizes unpleasant the poverty that does not mean indigence and revealing of it to the people. He knows the expression of needfulness in the divine court of the Eminent God as being a prerequisite for drawing the attention and receiving the forgiveness of His Highness the God and opines that one does not deserve the divine mercy unless he reveals this poverty. He presents this concept with a beautiful allegory in the story of a sweet paste-selling child.

"The sea of the mercy does not begin flowing unless the sweet paste-selling child starts crying"

"O' brother, the child is your eyes so try to correctly devote your desires to crying"

"If you want to be given that robe of honor, you should make the child of your eyes crying over the body" (Kharazmi, 1987).

Security and Jocundity:

Poverty bestows security and illuminates the heart. It recommends one to practice destitution if s/he wants to remain secure:

"If the broken things can be saved then become broken; security is in destitution so go inside poverty" (Kharazmi, 1987).

The real poor person is happy with his poverty. The real poor person is like iron and it is cheerful under the hammer of poverty and fire of hardship and it impudently goes into the fire so as to take the color thereof.

Ability of Observing Piety:

In poverty, we are immune of the calamities of the greedy soul and we are more likely to observe piety.

“Poverty is considered as an eternal honor because the indigent persons remain pious”

“The richness and the rich person failed for their tolerance said farewell to them with their possession of power”

“Poverty and inability kept the human beings safe against the disasters of the insatiable and greedy soul” (Kharazmi, 1987).

5. SUMMARY

After investigating the perspectives of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them, especially Imam Sajjad (PBUH), as well as the viewpoints of the theosophists, especially Mowlavi, about poverty, there are seen a similarity and a dissimilarity between them. Poverty is admired, demanded, the cause of honor, cause of development in existence and ground of reaching the vicinity of the God in both of the perspectives if it means desertion of attachment to the material belongings in heart, desertion of the human characteristics, forgetting about one's own self and being dependent on nothing except the God and feeling of absolute needfulness for the rich essence of the Eminent God. Imam (may Allah hail on him) calls himself “Afqar Al-Foqarā'a Elayh” [the most needful of all the needy persons towards the God] and asks the rich divine essence to add to such poverty of his; Mowlana, as well, realizes such a kind of poverty as the cause of needlessness and survival for the persons with such poverty are devoid of all the dependencies and only need the God and render themselves disappeared in the existence of the God and such fading causes their arrival at the sea of the spiritual secrets. However, poverty is extolled if it is accompanied by lack of attachment to the material possessions and Mowlavi calls it “leaf of leaflessness”. But, the opposite point of the viewpoints by the theosophists and immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) is the perspective that poverty that means indigence and destitution is never to be requested and it has never been the cause of happiness as viewed by Ahl Al-Bayt (peace be upon them), particularly the sire of all the worshippers (PBUH). Although all of them have lived a life with voluntary poverty and exercised piety and forbearance and have been thankful, they have never demanded poverty and an indigent life in their petitions and prayers. Conversely, there are many prayers reached us from the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) for demanding and requesting abundant sustenance and vast blessings. They have always encouraged their followers to supply themselves with sustenance in the permitted ways and realized it as an equivalent to the Jihad on the path of the God. Their own way of conduct has also been making efforts for generating wealth not for piling up material properties and living luxurious life but for helping the poor and solving the problems of the society. However, most of the theosophists admire material indigence and have demanded it. Khajeh Abdullah Ansari realizes the “richness in the properties as nothing but disaster if they are gained through permissible ways and also as nothing but being driven away and cursed if they are acquired through forbidden ways and also as torture and punishment and chastisement in case that efforts are solely made for collecting a lot of properties”. Theosophists become happy when poorness comes and unhappy when it goes; they realize poverty as a gift of the God to the ones appointed by Him. Poverty has been least frequently praised in the words of the Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) and it has been most frequently extolled in the words of the theosophists. However, the poor persons, friendship with them, conversing with them

and assisting them have been admired in both of the perspectives. The second result obtained in the present study is that the real poverty and assertion of the needfulness to the rich essence of the Eminent God causes empowerment of the heart and decoration of the human beings with wisdom, patience, reliance, vastness of dispositions and other human virtues. On the contrary, the human beings have exercised insurgence and mutiny upon finding themselves rich and needless. They are sometimes captured in whole by haughtiness and pride and some other times by avarice, selfishness and fear. But, if the human beings gain a full insight over poverty, they will become dissuaded from all the creatures and they will have their eyes only on the Eminent God as a result of which they will neither fear and grieve nor will they indulge themselves into inferiority and humility before the others; they will also stop boastfully treating the others. So, the perception of the real poverty can relieve the human beings from many of the immoralities and depravities and become the foundation and basis of many of the ethical virtues.

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