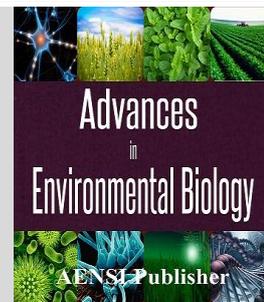




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## Theology of Hope in Islamic Mysticism with a Focus on Rumi's Thought

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## ABSTRACT

Hope is the most substantial ingredient of human life without which living is germane to agitation, anxiety, and even devastation. Thus, Religions and Mysticism thereof have accommodated the concept in their horizon of vision. "Theology of Hope" as a theory in modern theology has been posited by the Protestant theologian, Jurgen Moltmann. In Islamic weltanschauung, the hub of human hope is God, and conversely, the Devil is the inviter of dismay and despair and the dispeller of Heaven-handed hope. The Holy Quran has recurrently alarmed humans against precipitation into despondency and reassured them the Divine condescendence and boundless mercy. In mysticism, Hope has been stipulated as one of the states in a wayfarer's deportment. In Rumi's thinking paradigm, Hope has been accentuated and expanded so much that it can be deemed as the specificity of his mystic system of theology which may otherwise be rendered as his "theology of hope".

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## INTRODUCTION

As a word, Hope means longing, expectancy, anticipation, and confidence and constancy, aspiration or inclination toward a deed with yearning for earning, awaiting an agreeable event or offer of contentment and security, and also refuge and solace. On the other hand, Despair is disappointment and fear (Dehkhoda Loghatname, ذیل ماده، *ibid*).

"Theology of Hope" as a theory in Christian Theology was propounded in a book under the same name in 1967 and paved its own path in contemporary Christian theology and became a cynosure in no time. In Moltmann's view, all universe longs for a renewed existence through recourse to "God of Hope". The response of a hoping Christian should entail the church mission for all nations, starvation for asceticism in the world, love for true life in this damaged and endangered creation. *Theology of Hope* is a vanguard in theology. Moltmann describes hope in Christianity as a conflict between dismay of nonexistence and promise for reconstruction. Such reconstruction wills to return to the glorious past in hopes of living in a Godly new future: A God who resides not far above us but far ahead of us and will drive us into his thought-out future for world.

Hope is also set in a sublime loft in Islamic culture. In Quran's perspective, hope is a sine qua non of belief and the paramount hope is that of meeting with God. (*So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anymore.* Al-Kahf:110). Elsewhere Allah says: "Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful"" (Az-Zumar:53). *Qonut* bears the meaning of despair and *Rahmat* here means mercy, and therefore explicates abstention from despair by "Indeed, Allah forgives all sins".

Hope, in the Holy Quran, has been attributed to various notions: material and mundane, such as Jacob's hope for his children's reunion in his company (Yusuf:83); immaterial and divine, like hope for the Hereafter (Al-Ankaboot:36); hope for Allah's amnesty (An-Nisaa:99); hope for His mercy (An-Noor:56); hope for redemption (Al-Qasas:67).

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In Quranic terms, much like hope that acts a vital role in the carnal and spiritual life of human, so does despair as a destructive and lethal agent. Allah, for human's inbuilt low capacity, depicts despair by saying: "And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then We withdraw it from him, indeed, he is despairing and ungrateful. But if We give him a taste of favor after hardship has touched him, he will surely say, "Bad times have left me." Indeed, he is exultant and boastful." (Hud:9-10)

Human's dismay in God's Mercy is among cardinal sins and He has denied him despair in a number of verses (Az-Zumar:53). Quranically, only the astray (Al-Hijr:56), and the disbelieving (Yusuf:87) are non-hopers in God's mercy. Therefore, human must be imbued with hope in all conditions, for even in the summit of despair, God may summon His subordinates to His mercy. (Ash-Shura:28; Ar-Room:49; Yusuf:110). Some of the Quranic verses translate dismay against God or Day of Judgment as the source of corruption, crime, rebellion, and insubordination. (Yunus:7,8,11,15; Al-Furqaan:21)

#### *Hope in Islamic Mysticism:*

Hope, in Sufi terminology, is heart's security onto a favorable object. It is the peace of the heart for a benign promise which is an abode of wayfarer's deportment. Hope is of three categories: hope for God, hope for proliferation of God's pardon, and hope for God's merit and remuneration. The difference between Hope and supplication is that the latter drives its agent into sloth and lethargy, whereas a hopeful individual holds a desirous entreaty and is closer to the objective.

Fear and hope are like two wings of a bird: when adjoined, the flier can carry on with flight, but when either dysfunctions, the bird flies into perdition [4] Hope meanwhile moderates fear so that the wayfarer would not dive into despair. AbuBakr Varraq has accordingly likened Hope to the divine breeze of compassion upon awed hearts in whose absence their senses would be wasted. [1]

Hope has also been defined by Abdullah Khafif (4<sup>th</sup> Cent. Mystic) as Qut-u-alqulub and the obedient must reside between fear and hope [5]. Shebli has been noted as saying: "Hope is demanding God not to plant in you hope for anyone except Him" (Siraj, 62).

In Bahaa Valad's (Rumi's Father) words, fear and hope are of paramountcy, too. He fathoms religion as a mélange of fear and hope; regarding hope as the fruit of God's benevolence, and awe as the product of His wrath. "And religion is a synthesis of two things: Hope and Awe; the latter is the world of bewilderment and the former the world of rapture. Neither can exist without either. Both necessitate two prostrations: one rooted in affection, and another emanating from rage" [3]

Shams Tabrizi has also explicated hope as: "But there exists no despair. Even when there remain two breaths of air, the first is hope, and for the second, bellow" (Shams Tabrizi, p. 95). Elsewhere he remarks: "Within despair, there is hope for consummation, and within consummation, there is grief for achieving naught. The day I was afflicted with fever, I was as blest with the tiding of tomorrow's health" (ibid, p. 42).

#### *Theology of Hope in Rumi's View:*

Hope in Rumi's theology is not just an extended sense of Hope in mystic tradition, but the concept has been so much accentuated and expanded that it can be deemed as the specific particular of his mystic system of theology. The notion has been of conscious recurrence and pivotal significance in his twin works: *Mathnawi* and *Divan of Shams*. Here, a number of their lines are revisited as follows:

(1/3615) God is wishing that every prince and captive should be hopeful and fearful and afraid.

(1/3616) the veil (separating the seen from the unseen), that they may be fostered behind this veil.

Rumi eyes fear and hope and their importance in mystic deportment in these two lines of Mathnawi. But in the following lines, hope is not merely offered in conjunction with fear, and therefore finds an exalted slot:

(1/724) Go not to the neighbourhood of despair: there are hopes. Go not in the direction of darkness: there are suns.

(3/2922)The prophets said, "Despair is wicked: the grace and the mercies of the Creator are infinite.

(3/2923)'Tis not proper to despair of such a Benefactor: cling to the saddle-strap of this Mercy.

(3638/1)God hath smitten the neck of despair, inasmuch as sin and disobedience have become obedience.

In Rumi's perspective, the dialectic between fear and hope in wayfarer's process of deportment will lead to removal of fear and the survival of hope. Rumi summons all to resort to hope and look up to the sun and avoid dismay and dark as it is a cardinal sin.

(2/3386)What help is there, then, but (to take) refuge with (God) the Helper? Despair is copper, and the elixir for it is (God's) regard.

(2/3387)Lay your despairs before Him, that ye may escape from irremediable pain.

Despair is a terminal illness that is to be remedied by God in whose will one may sublimate his copper of dismay into the gold of hope.

(3/ 1865) From the Divine Presence came the cry (in response): 'O man of

(devotional) work, O thou that hast hope of Me in every grief,  
(3/ 1866) Thou hast the good thought (of Me) and the fair hope that at each moment bids thee mount higher.

One must be sanguine of absorbing God's favor and munificence in every predicament that is required for this earthly life. Such good faith is what exalts and glorifies human.

Besides Mathnawi, Divan of Shams has also reveled in lavish conceptualization of hope. Rumi's sanguine and berserk spirit has depicted beautiful images of the deportments of the wayfarer hopeful of the divine beloved. What follows is a sonnet that has it all in one.

*Do not despair, my soul, for hope has manifested itself;  
The hope of every soul has arrived from the unseen.  
Do not despair, though Mary has gone from your hands,  
For that light which drew Jesus to heaven has come.  
Do not despair, my soul, in the darkness of this prison,  
For that king who redeemed Joseph from prison has come.  
Jacob has come forth from the veil of occlusion,  
Joseph who rent Zulaikha's veil has come.  
You who all through night to dawn have been  
Crying "O Lord," mercy has heard that "O Lord" and has come.  
O pain which has grown old, rejoice, for the cure has come;  
O fastened lock, open, for the key has come.  
You who have abstained fasting from the Table on high,  
Break your fast with joy, for the first day of the feast has come.  
Keep silence, keep silence, for by virtue of the command "Be!"  
That silence of bewilderment has augmented beyond all speech. (Rumi, p.105)*

#### Conclusion:

*Raja* or Hope which had previously been regarded by pre-Rumi mystics as a wing of God-ward wayfarer (adjoining the wing of fear) found a lofty status which defies being a sole state of mystic module. Broadly, God is the heart of hope: a fount that never stops springing. Thus, there is no trace of fear and there is nothing but hope. Hope is the guiding angel that leads the sanguine wayfarer through the formidable gorges and straits of hopelessness and reaches him to the spring of eternal hope. Indeed, the concept of hope in Rumi's philosophy is focal and strategic so much so that denying it in his meditative system would mean total negation of the theological structure of his weltanschauung. In other words, hope is thus deemed a keyword of Rumi's mysticism and a distinct feature of his Sufi theology.

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