

Analysis of Absurdity of Life in Viewpoint of Abul Ala Ma'arri

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Abstract

Abul Ala Ma'arri (974-1058) is one of the rare thinkers that his ideas are dominated by pessimism and his thoughts are dominated by doubt, contradiction and anxiety. Philosophy, ethics, poetry, literature, and his life style is mysterious and covered by hate of existence, pessimism to the world, absurdity and disappointment of life. Pessimism, critical thought and innovative styles of Sheikh Ma'arri are resulted from bad temperament of human; dominant determinism on living things in the world; trapping of soul in the prison of body; amusement of mind to find convincing answers for mystery of creation; lack of truth; and ambiguity of human's destiny. In order to fight and survive from life with a lot of pains and suffers that has no end except for inexistence; Abul Ala has presented 3 solutions as follows: a) forcible consent and quietism against divine destiny b) optional suffering in order to overcome natural and forcible suffers and c) predestinarian death as the last solution in order to make human free from bitterness of life. At the present study, it has been attempted to find origins of absurdity and pessimism of Abul Ala towards life and his strategies and solutions in this regard would be also investigated.

Key words: Abul Ala Ma'arri, absurdity of life, pessimism, suffer, death

Introduction

Pessimistic attitudes towards the world and tendency for disappointment and absurdity in life include wide range of schools of thinkers with long background of ontology, epistemology, and ethic-orientation, which have been emerged in previous times in different manners. In ancient Greece, Epicureans, Cynics, Stoics and even Sophists have been representatives of this style of thought and life (Lucas). More clear cases can be found in eastern religions and Brahmanistic, Hinduism, Ginny and Buddhism religions (philosophy, history of religions-Hume, live religions of the world, and comprehensive history of religions). Among divine religions, Monasticism and inbred sin of human in the current distorted Christian tends to present such idea (Thomas Michelle). However, emergence of abundant philosophical and ethical schools since

Modernism age and emergence of famous thinkers such as Schopenhauer, Sartre, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Kafka, Camus, Erich Fromm and others, philosophies of nihilism and pessimism were increased with arranged bases and principles. Hence, tendency for absurdity of life in different societies has been changed into an important crisis at the current age (Nasri Abdullah).

In the early stage of Islam, pessimistic and negative tendencies for the worldly trappings were seriously and logically encountered by the Islam Prophet. After demise of Holly Prophet, in

different periods with different motivations, these attitudes were changed into theological and ethical sects and hence, some Sufism, the mystical, Salafism and deterministic attitudes could reinforce them. As a result, one may face

some great Muslim characters, which used to speak about filth of the world and wickedness of human and used to consider the world empty and absurd. One of the most famous persons in this regard is Arab philosopher and poet “Abul Ala Ma’arri”. His kind of view to the world, human, and life and absurdity in Abul Ala’s Style has been presented in no world-averse school and in view of no pessimist character so far. This specialty needs researchers of philosophy of religion and ethics and also seekers of life concept to become familiar with this kind of lifestyle and thinking style and find a clear perception of meaningless of life based on Islamic values and thoughts through pathology of reasons for absurdity of life of Abul Ala in terms of “knowing objects through their opposites”. Through this, they can move in perfection way based on hopeful principles and basis of Islam and also they can be careful about theoretical and practical slips in this way.

Life in view of Ma’arri

The aim of Ma’arri by life is “worldly life” and calls it with significantly negative interpretations with high negative concepts such as evil, cadaver, corruption, prison, and sedition, bad luck, vice, difficult, fatigue, trick, fire, sorrow, brutal instinct, and crime (Ma’arri). He expresses his hate, protest, and dissatisfaction about the world in a highly negative manner. He has a pessimistic, disappointing and doubtful view to all worldly trappings from birth, death, property, position, wealth, lust, eating, and sleeping to God, Prophet, and religions and even before birth and after death. He considers all sections and periods of life source of amusement, pessimism, disappointment, suffer, inexistence, and evil;

although these moments and periods may be full of pleasure and enjoyment.

In view of Ma’arri, life is “world” and the world is a place for evils and bad luck; house of fire

with no heaven; house of problems and difficulties; unsafe house; a house with no arrangement and in short, this world is equal to mother of all difficulties and suffers. “I call this world as the mother of all difficulties, which has no arrangement, and hence, destruction can be appeared in every moment of life”. His hate about life is to some extent that he considers marriage of his father a crime, since this marriage has caused his birth. “This is a crime on behalf of my father on me; although I can’t cause such crime on another person” (Yaghoot). Ma’arri has not married to end of his life. Similar to Mazdakian, he believes that benefit of human is in never being born; “Benefit of Adam and all human is in never being born”. His aim by never born is being inanimate, since people have been stone and inanimate before that they can have life and soul. After attaching soul, people gained life. He wishes that what it would be, if we could remain stone and inanimate; “life conducts human towards loss and inexistence. If life was not existed, people could remain as a stone without soul.”. Ma’arri considers life as nested prisons, which caused many bottlenecks for people and don’t leave people, until their death. He liked that people call him as “Rheen Al-mahbasin”; meaning a person trapped in two prisons of blindness and staying home. However, then he added another prison to them and in fact was trapped in three prisons; “I see myself captured in 3 prisons including staying home, blindness, and survival of soul in an evil body”. Abul Ala believes that beginning point of life is the time that soul is attached to the body and this belonging can be a factor for imposing suffers and bad luck of life on human. Physical body before attachment of soul was a non-integrated member that had no integration and unity and had

also no life. However, this soul collected these separated organs and provided a stable link and relation among them and gave them life, so that it can impose this heavy pressure and responsibility

on that and can prepare it for tolerating heavy responsibilities of the world. Since this sense of belonging is created forcibly and without authority of human, it has provided conditions for constant dispute and interaction between worldly life and human. On one hand, life with ominous enjoyments and bad events has nothing for human, except for suffer and pain and on the other hand, human can't finish efforts for achieving worldly enjoyments and pleasures; "bothers and annoyance of the life will not leave people alone and human can't also leave the life". They have to fill their stomachs from the carrion or have to fight against each other, which both can result in death and villainy. Abul Ala has considered the world as glamorous and deceptive instrument for trick and a factor for hiding the truth, in which people would not be happy even for a moment; "be aware that the world is unpleasant for people and never happiness and pleasure would be found in it". He has concluded that all life is along with suffer, pain and failure and hence, there is no satisfaction and easement in it for people; "the life is totally pain and suffer and bitterness and has no advantage, except for wasting time. Life is also such as a dark and turbulent sea, which sadness and problems would become more and more in ages after 50". At the end, Sheikh Ma'arri has presented a general basis for bad luck, suffer, and corruption that is amount of their utilization of rational sense and intelligence. Every living thing that has more emotion and wisdom in the world, the pains and suffers would be also abundant in life of that living thing. Therefore, human would face more pain and hardness and difficulties than all other living things and plants and animals have less pain than human, since they have less emotion; "Almighty

God has placed evil in animals as instinct; although he has protected them from more evils, since he has created more advantage of intellect. Hence, if a stone in the way causes damage of

human, the stone is not guilty, but the guilt is on the wise person, who has clashed to it" (Al-Ma'arri, Al-fosul Va Al-ghayat). Although Abul Ala considers death as an end for human's pains and bad locks in the world, described destiny of human after death dark and uncertain.

Reasons of absurdity in view of Ma'arri

Sheikh Ma'arri has denied meaningfulness of life based on his philosophical and ethical basis. If the aim by concept of life is that every living thing has been created based on its talents and existence level in order to achieve perfection and final destiny. In general, he neither considers system of existence world based on being systematic, not considers it possible. Hence, no living thing has been create for a perfect goal; although the goal is assumed as a predetermined goal on behalf of God, in which human is responsible for discovering it and adjusting their life with it. This goal can be also faked of human and people can design and implement it through using their rational ability of determining goals. However, if the aim by meaning of life is that in the world, there is a valuable issue that people devote their life in order to achieve that. As it was mentioned, Abul Ala has expressed the most nipping interpretations for life, world and human. He has not only also considered any value for them, but also believes that all things in the world are invaluable and whole life is full of evil and corruption and also has pictured it with extreme sadness and pain.

In "Al-fosul Va Al-Ghayat", Abul Ala has referred to a part of absurdity of life as follows: "The Almighty God is able to create human in a manner that they can watch through their feet, hear through their hands, cry through their fingers, taste through their ears, smell through

their neck bone, walk on their head in order to do works, can place 2strong mountains beside each other like horses, win on a wild goat and place it

beside royal falcon, trap desires, and can finally impose disasters and pains of the earth on it” (Al-Ma’arri). Taha Hossein believes that mysterious sentences and words of Ma’arri refer to his philosophical perspective, which is resulted from philosophical ideas of Epicure. Epicure has denied extreme cause of living things and believes that the world has been created from no certain destination and goal (Hossein, 1974). Abul Ala has also emphasized absurdity of the existence and all living things and believes that human should not think that the current system has been created based on certain cause and effects and in the best manner, but only God can interfere the world and its affairs based on his intention and destiny and can also run it in any manner he want. Thus, if the God tends to do something, he can make human watch through their feet and hear through their hands and everything impossible is possible for God. Hence, he mentions that fishes, birds, and sheep have not been created for eating, contrary to imagine of human, and also they have not been created, so that human can use their milk, egg or other products. Bee has not been created to supply honey for human; sun has not been created to supply light and warmth for human; water has not been created for quench the thirst of living things and other things, but also human has used and analyzed goals of these things in order to meet their needs and then have called this action as theology. The almighty God has not determined certain and specific goal for living things and if there is a forge in this regard, human are unaware of it and finally absolute doubt would overcome human. In this regard, the world and its living things have not been created for giving services to human and also human can’t be considered as the superior of the creatures. Accordingly, he refused eating meat

and began to be a vegetarian for more than 50 years since he was staying at home to end of his life. He gone also beyond it and refused eating

many ceremonially clean foods and used to use them in case of necessity and less than it. Hence, some people used to consider him follower of Brahma and Ginny Schools (Al-Fakhouri, 1995). Ma’arri considers humans as confused, impatient and astonished living things, which don’t know that they have been created where and for what purpose and also where they are going; “didn’t know that when they have been created and didn’t find that where they are going; hence, they became resent of the earth with no power and remedy”. Divine will is also based on this issue that humans are created with evil and bad luck, tolerate pains and suffers and are confused and finally, they would be destroyed with death and expectation for return of soul to body is also in a nimbus of ambiguities. Ma’arri has traced destiny of humans in the world and futurity ambiguous and dark and finally, has ordered for destruction of humans; “we have been created for uncertain subject and would live for a while and then, we would be died and destroyed”. However, the thing caused such pessimistic view of Abul Ala towards life is rooted in type of his view on human and life. Sheikh Ma’arri has considered human as a 3-presence living thing and combined of material, spiritual, and rational aspects. Taha Hossein has explained a part of words of Abul Ala in *Fosul Va Al-Ghayat*, in which he has reproached passions. Taha Hossein has interpreted a part of speeches of Abul Ala in *Fosul va Al-Ghayat*, in which he has taunted passions, and has stated that the factor of taunt is not body of Abul Ala. This is because; the body is single, solid and silent and has no sound. He has also stated that passions of Abul Ala are not also the cause, since passion would not speak with itself through these phrases and would not make its own fearing. Therefore, the real speaker is same wisdom that considers body and soul and

thinks about their relation and separates their characteristics and also interfere them as much as possible. Taha Hossein here has achieved 3

aspects of human in view of Ma'arri and refers phrases of necessities in order to confirm it, which Ma'arri appreciates the mind and also doesn't consider passions as the evil (Hosseini, 1971).

Approaches of Abul Ala Ma'arri

Abul Ala has applied 3 approaches in order to fight to life and to become free from absurd life and evil and bad locks. However, he has presented these approaches not to compromise with the world and not to remove disasters, difficulties and not for destruction, but also to revenge from this world and in terms of attacking to it and also in order to display will and power of humans to force the world to be given up against humans. These three approaches are as follows: a) forcible give up of passions against the current situation b) intentional pain and increasing it to the final degree c) deterministic death in order to being free from the life

Conclusion

The thing can be raised from attitude and nature of Ma'arri is that absurdity of life for any reason refers to painful and suffering life for human, contrary to desires of human, and its landscape is absolute darkness; unless one can confirm statement of Stace that believes that a meaning and hope is hidden even in absurdity. If so, meaning of life in view of Ma'arri is as follows: evil humans in the unclean and dirty world have to live with failure and bad locks, which can result in inexistence and nothing more.

Abul Ala has built his philosophy and lifestyle based on pessimism, absurdity, suffer and pain.

He used to accept any kind of thought and idea

from different religions that used to confirm his perspective and also used to reject and deny other

thoughts.

He believed that the Almighty God is the only factor for creation, destiny, alteration, and interpretation and has considered no authority and permission for human; although he has also determined scope of such force for God, so that God has to create the world unclean and create humans evil and there is no goal except for inexistence and absurdity for it.

Abul Ala validates intellect and trusts on it and prefers it to narration. However, finally the intellect would be ordered for divine resignation and would lose its efficiency.

Ma'arri believes that pain and suffer are solutions for survival, not for achieving perfection and going towards sky close to sublime absolute existence, but also it tolerates pains for same pain and suffer and there is no effect of sky.

He has confirmed thought of Epicureans on absurdity of living things; although he selects suffering and tolerating pains in the world instead of enjoying it.

Although Abul Ala has selected undergoing mortification and has changed his food habit from eating meat to eating vegetables, he has not done this in order to improve soul spiritually, but also he has followed self-discipline and revenging from the nature.

He believes in inferiority of the world; although he doesn't remain in the most inferior places with the most unclean foods and doesn't leave cleanness, but also he used to live in his home with respect and honorableness in perfect cleanness.

Sheikh Ma'arri believes in innate guilt of human and corruption of marriage; although he doesn't accept faith in prophet in order to meet natural

sin and doesn't permit marriage in terms of removing corruption of corruptor.

He believes that death is the last solution for being released from life; although he doesn't consider suicide allowed and doesn't encourage people for it. Although he is satisfied with divine destiny; it is not because of optimism to theology, but also it is because there is no way except for accepting divine force and destiny. Abul Ala conducts divine devotions such as saying prayer, fast and alms, even more than divine required limits, but not for doing religious duties and satisfaction of God, but also he used to do this as pain and suffer was suppressing his tough passions. He agrees with destruction and death, but destruction for him is absolute inexistence, darkness, and absurdity, not destruction for God that is same life and reality. He discusses on absurdity of life, but not same as many nihilists because of this issue that no meaning can be found in life, but also since life is nothing other than pain, suffer and corruption and has no end and conclusion other than inexistence and death. However, meaningfulness, in its both common perceptions that are purposefulness of creation and valuable nature of life has been confirmed by Quran as the main source of Islam religion. Almighty God has stated in regard with proving the issue as follows: "we didn't create the heavens and the earth and that between them useful and rightful" (Ahghagh/3 and Hizr/85). He has also expressed same issue in other words as follows: "we didn't create the heavens and the earth and that between them useless". He also has stated that "And We did not create the heavens and earth and that between them in play" (Al-Dukhan/38). The two styles of speech can emphasize purposefulness of creation clearly and can also deny any kind of play and absurdity. Karim Quran has not considered only purposefulness of the existence and has also expressed goal and destiny of the world clearly as follows: "Then did you think that we created you

uselessly and that to us you would not be returned?" (Mominon/115); in addition, about

18 verses with words related to "return" have discussed on return of humans towards God and the verse "Esterja'a" is the most common verse "Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return". Moreover, many verses have emphasized value and respectfulness of human as follows: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Isra/70). This verse has considered human as the most valuable living thing in the world and has congratulated it typically as follows: "praise on Almighty God for creating the best creature (human)". These values have achieved to a degree that God has considered human as the only competent living thing for being divine vicar "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know" (Rum/30). Holly Quran has made human achieving the peak point as follows: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship me" (Al-Dhariyat/56). Finally, human can achieve meeting and approaching Almighty God "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it" (al-Inshiqaq/6).

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