

## BEDIL'S TEXT OF SILENCE: OVERCOMING CONTEMPORARY POSTMODERN NIHILISM BY INVOKING MYSTICAL RESOURCES IN ABDUL QADIR BEDIL

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*Iqbal observed about Bedil that, he, along with Ghalib, taught him "how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after assimilating foreign ideals of poetry." The author argues that the currently dominant cultural formation appears to be the alien postmodern orientation that can be assimilated today with the help of Bedil and some other representative figures in the Sabk-i-Hindi tradition. Focusing particularly on Bedil and engaging with him vis-à-vis Heidegger and Derrida, the author argues that, living as we are, willy nilly, in the postmodern world struggling to overcome the pervasive condition of nihilism, Bedil's "romantic"-mystical orientation that echoes great figures in German Romanticism and American Transcendentalism and Blake amongst English Romantics can be appropriated to evolve a more informed and nuanced response to nihilism. Especially fruitful could prove revisiting, in postmodern idiom, Bedil's "art of failure," his aesthetics of wonder, his advocacy of the text of silence he claimed need not be edited, his more activist or dynamic understanding of mysticism against more quietist or a static one, his elaboration of Akbarian thesis of "arriving of non-arriving" his "skeptically" inflected appropriation of more traditional Sufi lore and his advocacy of radical innocence before the Word/Truth/Being resisting all ordinary representational linguistic and cognitive attempts that Derridean and Heideggerian approaches have strongly questioned. The author seeks to show why Bedil's poetry deserves to be brought in the foreground the way Heidegger foregrounded the poetry of Holderlin and Rilke to better engage with the problem of finding meaning in a world where transcendence as traditionally understood has become increasingly less accessible and pathological reactions to its loss or politicized appropriation of it in religious fundamentalism more dangerous.*

For ages my beloved came into my embrace veiled  
Yet another one of her coquetries that I, Bedil, well know.

In the desert of fancy there are no fixed points  
To find our bearings no need have we

Only the word heard through the veil, no audience with the heart had I  
How to disclose what I did not see, the mirror-maker you should ask  
Bedil (M. A. Farooqi's trans.)

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### I. Bedil's Oriental Sensibility

Oriental sensibility understood with respect to Oriental or traditional Metaphysics, and traditional doctrines of art and culture seem uniquely tailored to address the challenge of nihilism and relativism that have bedeviled post-Nietzschean thought and culture. A brief note on the traditional or oriental view of transcendence follows to situate Bedil in proper context in relation to the problem of nihilism we seek to engage within light of poetic and metaphysical doctrine informing *sabk-i hindi*.

"برچه آنجاست چو آنجاری اینجا گردد  
چه خیال است که امروز تو فردا گردد"

"What is "there" becomes "here" when you reach it; likewise, your today disguises itself in the form of tomorrow."

"تاخموشی نگزینی حق و باطل باقی است  
رشته را که گره جمع نسازد دوسرا است"

"So long as you do not resume silence, the distinction of appearance and reality will remain; a thread not tied by a knot must always have two ends."

Bedil follows the paradigm promulgated by Sufis in which the Master guides one to the revealed word, "the word that turns into reality the moment an innocent soul approaches it after its long sojourn in hell and purgatory." Everyone has to individually travel the long road of deindividuation or decreation through selling our very dear self. With Buddha, we are required to be light unto ourselves (a theme constantly repeated by Bedil). As Bedil puts it:

Discover eternal joy  
A fulfilled heart  
None but the self can get us there  
I asked my heart what I should do with time  
I learned I have no use for time  
We are surrounded by amazement  
None but the self can show us the truth

All actions fall in the domain of temporality, as does conceptual intellect's operations and the whole empire of language as ordinarily used by those who are not poets or prophets. If it is asked what is Bedil doing when writing if it is not an act to bridge the gulf between himself and the Beyond, one might reply in his own words:

Friends seek struggle in this world  
Struggle takes us to the festivities of the delicate

Do not ask where my writings came from  
Grief has a bond with the writer's profession

All struggle leads us to affirm the Spirit's freedom and spontaneity of movement. It is all play. In fact, the very motive of creation is a play of the Absolute as A. K. Coomaraswamy has argued in one of his important essays on play anthologized in Roger Lipsey's anthology of Coomaraswamy's work.

Having clarified key postulates of Oriental view of transcendence concerning Sankara, Ibn Arabi, and Nagarjuna that profoundly informs the universe of poets in *sabk-i hindi*, we may proceed to discuss a few verses of Bedil that lucidly state the theses regarding self-transcendence, mystery, radical innocence, detachment from all limiting beliefs.

## II. In Mystery is Salvation: Bedil and Heidegger on Radical Innocence

Both Bedil and Heidegger have questioned claims made on behalf of reason and the traditional view of philosophy that has marginalized or suppressed the realm of unreason or intuitive or theonomous reason. Both find art and poetry their key resource for finding meaning in life. Both propose radical innocence to Being instead of ratiocinative activity as proper to the human state marked by creaturely limitations, finitude, and movement towards death. Both have a special role for language vis-à-vis Reality or Being that isn't reducible to usual dismissive accounts one finds in many mystically inclined thinkers who see only limited nonmystical and non-metaphysical functions like communication about certain states of affairs, human conventions, etc. that don't integrally link language to higher things in cosmos or spirit. Both consider proposed exoteric theological and rationalist philosophical answers inadequate or not quite helpful. Both propose something like contemplative thinking that great poetry embodies in dialectical/adversarial argumentative mode employed by conventional philosophies and theologies. It is the Mystery of being, the holy act of living that is salvific on its own. There is nowhere to go, nothing to achieve, no grand political goal to be reached. More artistic/aesthetic than cerebral or cognitive encounters with the world distinguishes fundamentally romantic-mystical thinkers Bedil and Heidegger.

We may now explore Heidegger's notion of thinking and poetry to situate Bedil's "position" in a contemporary idiom. For Heidegger, "There is a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual." Heidegger's philosophy meant something that reminds us more of Arab philosophers than modern Western post-Cartesian philosophers. It appears that the view of aims and definition of philosophy he approves of is more a kind of mysticism than philosophy as generally taken by the moderns. Key points in Heidegger that make engaging with him possible for a mystical poet like Bedil include Being, Mystery, Death, Poetry. The quest for Being is a mystical project and the ways to it – thinking, poetry. The primary complaint against philosophy is that it has forgotten the the question of Being, and this task has to be carried out by the poet. Instead of calculative thinking, he calls for meditative thinking that "contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is" (Heidegger 1966: 46) and that can consist simply in "dwell[ing] on what lies close to us and meditate[ing] on what is closest..." (Heidegger 1966: 47). He proposes for accessing the Truth of Being something like "learned ignorance" of the mystics, and attention to something too close to requiring

“building complicated concepts.” Instead, “it is concealed in the step back that lets thinking enter into a questioning that experiences...” (Heidegger 1977: 255). The problem occurs only for representational thought to tackle such a primordial, pre-reflective encounter with fundamentally simple Being. Heidegger requires a kind of will-less waiting, or as he says, a kind of “releasement,” for this experiencing of Being (Heidegger 1966: 62, 66). He calls for, like mystics, opening up the human spirit, standing naked before the Mystery, perfecting the faculty of attention, forgetting the manipulating, willing, technological self that modern man has been reduced to, to lose the self in doing, in work, and “letting the world light up, clear up, join itself into one in manifold self-appropriations, letting us find in it a real dwelling place instead of the cold, sterile, hostility which we find ourselves” (Hafstadter 1971: xvii).

This recalls the old mystical emphasis on being or realizing the truth rather than just knowing it second hand, conceptually or as if from a distance, because the truth was an ontological issue rather than an epistemological one. The Being Heidegger invites us to “is not conceived of as a thing, but as that which ‘transcends’ things thinking and talking about it in traditional terms becomes impossible.” The metaphysics, which Heidegger labels as nihilism, and which poets would seek to bypass, is concerned with representing Being instead of “thinking” it as Being. As Marmysz paraphrases Heidegger’s point:

We are guilty of nihilistic thinking any time that we fail to recognize the fact that language, and the rational and logical tools it utilizes, necessarily chops up what “is” into fragments, and so falsifies and “covers over” Being -itself. ..Heideggerian thought implores us to accept everything that “is,” and simply to allow Being to speak to us through its beings. Instead of actively rejecting and overturning the way that things are, it asks us to open ourselves to the possibilities of what might be. It requests that we listen to Being and come to understand its full potential (Marmysz 2003: 77).

Derrida’s key critiques of metaphysical thinking, representational ideology, truth narratives largely echo Nietzsche and Heidegger and have been shown to have striking convergence with Nagarjuna, Sankara, and Ibn Arabi. We may proceed to discuss Bedil’s Text of Silence as a nondeconstructable expression of the thesis that post-Nietzsche and Heidegger and post-deconstruction, we can still maintain mystical-poetic invoking of silence as the answer to the questions whose posing is said to leave us at the brink of nihilism.

### III. Bedil’s Text of Silence

Bedil has proposed an “answer” to nihilism. Moreover, that consists of not conceding the problem of meaninglessness in events or texts and instead suggesting considering another “text” accessible to anyone interested. In fact, we are goaded to this text, forced to take heed of it but usually seek to escape engaging with it.

A text, even if it is entirely full of meaning, can be edited or added to: Silence is a text from which one cannot pick and choose (Bedil, 1963-64: 251 S. R. Faruqi’s translation).

Were the silence-theme to blossom, the floret with unopened lips Could become the bulbul's teacher (Bedil 1997: 805, S. R. Faruqi' s translation).

"تاخموشی دا شتیم آفاق بیے تشویش بود  
موج این بحراز زبان ماتلاطم کرده است"

"As long as silence reigned (i.e., as long as there was no verbalization of Reality) all was calm and undisturbed; it is the tongue of man that has given a hot-bed of stormy waves to the ocean (of life)."

My brain does not understand the truth  
But my heart shows me the truth  
Amazement is there when the heart speaks  
I am all aflame to experience the truth  
This world is the place of truth  
Time will take us to the truth  
Let me exhibit the truth  
Meet me in the circle of passion  
Feel your heart  
Listen to the nightingale's silence  
See the tears of joy pouring.

Silence is the answer to fourteen metaphysical questions, according to the Buddha. Postmodern thinkers would largely appreciate if not necessarily agree with the tenor of this "answer." The Silence that the Word punctured is primordial; it corresponds to supreme speech as it originated and yet unclothed in thought. The Silence is the argument of arguments against all those who preach, who judge, who have ideologies to sell, grand narratives to impose, beliefs to be anxiously guarded or attached to. Silence is the doctrine in Zen Buddhism and constitutes the essence of all theological answers. *What Is God?* Moreover, what can one do but be silent concerning it. According to the Quranic opening verses, God is the Mystery, and the mystery of existence resists all attempts at decoding by interpreters and scientists. So, what do we do in the face of the Mystery? Silence, the best of poets would advise.

We may note the story of Buddha and the birth of Zen Buddhism in which flower is exchanged to indicate the point that truth is best experienced and exchanged without words, in Silence. In the age that following Nietzsche is more or less post-metaphysical, the only metaphysics possible is what may be called the metaphysics of Silence that has been characteristically the *via negativa* of traditional mysticism. It describes the Mystery of Being of being, undifferentiated Absolute, the God beyond God or Godhead, the Beyond- Being or Non-Being or the Supraformal Essence. Here language and all representational stratagems fail. Here even the negative theology is not smart enough to do justice to the Divine Darkness, the Void, the Nameless Nothing. One may quote here a few statements of Sufis to further substantiate the point Bedil is making. "He who speaks becomes silent before the Divine Essence."

(Abdul Karim al-Jili) “Be silent that the Lord who gave thee language may speak.” (Rumi) “The furthest from God among the devotees are those who speak the most of him.” (Bistami) (Qtd in Perry, 1979).

Mysticism deconstructing both phonocentrism and graphocentrism seeks primordial silence that preceded God’s speech or word, where all contradictions are resolved. The sacred scriptures, for him, always try to transcend words and everything that has to deal with words with speech, and they are signified in terms of meaning, truth, telos, God distorts and falsifies Religion. Authentic Religion escapes being simply a textual product by emphasizing being and silence. The scripture always points beyond itself, deconstructing itself, always asking us to go beyond or transcend scripture’s textual reality and find God in silence and void. The only center, the only signified of religious scriptures, is emptiness – nay emptiness of even emptiness. Nothing has any meaning, and everything is naught save God who signifies only the impossibility of all significations, communication, and ultimate nothingness – *Shunyata*. Moreover, the best way to speak of God is not to say that he is nothing or emptiness of emptiness, for even this could be seen as an assertion, a truth claim, but to be silent and not to commit oneself to say at all. It means prelinguistic witnessing of phenomena. Suchness cannot be thus deconstructed

#### IV. Bedil: God/Truth/Beloved as Unattainable Quest

Bedil does offer us a vision of love and fulfillment that postmodern thinkers might find interesting, if not entirely, to their taste. He does not trade in any grand vision or narrative of Truth. Neither does he claim to have found his Love. God remains somewhat of an enigma, as does Meaning/Heaven/God. One may quote Faizi and then Bedil on this question.

Don’t seek from the heavens the mysteries  
Of beginningless eternity: the heavens are far,  
Day and night there Are but curtains strung by darkness and light.  
Don’t harbour the ambition of putting foot on the heights  
For that station is at a great altitude;  
Don’t speak of coming close to him, for the Sovereign  
Is jealous of all others (Faizi: 29, S. R. Faruqi’ s trans.).

This is Bedil:

Humans are not capable of understanding the truth  
Impossible that truth would appear in this world  
Our heart filled with fear  
Even if we see the truth, we worry to approach it  
We are here for a reason  
To become a pearl we have to untangle many waves  
You will cleave the chest of a world for one heart to appear

It is a lifetime that I did not find a way to become lost  
 To see heart's image in the mirror  
 When lost in love except love no other sign one will find.

How can we know the purpose of existence?  
 Amazement will come with the truth  
 Do not hold the mirror for each breath  
 The last breath is enough for me to know the truth

I travelled: by flying or by the labour  
 Of stumbles and leaps,  
 I travelled everywhere until  
 I Arrived at non-arriving.  
 (Bedil 1997: 589 V)

Beauty is never fully unveiled for Bedil.

Bedil do not ask of me the enchantment of hope's plenitude  
 I stretched the promise of today onto tomorrow's shore  
 Me and my lover together painting an embrace  
 I desire from the great artist one such work

It implies that this never happens. Strangely, we do not want union but the ceaseless movement towards It. Lessing has famously refused to barter, exchanging quest for truth to truth. Union with God that Sufis talk about is at best a metaphor that never implies all ontological difference has been wiped out or all possibility of further movement of Spirit has ceased. God is never found but ever approximated; his revelations are ceaseless, or the play of His Names is open-ended.

#### V. Bedil's Aesthetics and Metaphysics of Wonder

Iqbal, in his "Stray Reflections," has observed the question of wonder in Plato and Bedil:

Wonder, says Plato, is the mother of all science. Bedil (Mirza Abdul (Qadir) looks at the emotion of wonder from a different standpoint. Says he: To Plato wonder is valuable because it leads to our questioning of nature, to Bedil, it has a value of its own, irrespective of its intellectual consequences. It is impossible to express the idea more beautifully than Bedil (Iqbal 1992: 83).

The truth as unconcealment, as the wondrous unveiling of things, as resplendent beauty is thus vouchsafed to Bedil:

Release the truth in your heart  
 Show what splendor it holds

Open your heart and share the beauty  
 You have travelled a long way to reach the truth  
 You have crowned the kings  
 Virtue and mercy is your mark  
 You have unlocked the treasure chest  
 Your palace is a place of joy to all  
 Those listening to you will be seated on flower petals  
 All is forgotten when listening to you  
 You will be the mirror of truth  
 Modesty will show when they listen  
 I will forget everything earthly and be with you

"ز موج پرده بروے حجاب نتوان بست  
 تو چشم بسته اسے بے خیر نقاب کجاست"

"The wave cannot screen the face of the Ocean  
 O heedless observer, thou hast closed thine eyes, where is the veil"?

"بیدل از خویش بایست رفتن  
 ورنه نتوان باں خرام رسید"

"Bedil! you ought to move out of yourself if you wish to have a vision of the beloved's graceful movement."

و نفس خیال باز رشته شوق کن تا ابد  
 ازل تبار ملک خدات زندگی

"Lose thy thought for a moment or two, prolong the thread of sympathy:  
 Then sweep freely from Eternity to Eternity in God's vast domain of life"!

The poet 'Urfi has said:

ز نقص تشنه لبی وان بعقل خویش مناز  
 دلت فریب گر از جلوه سراب نخورد

"Do not be – proud of your power of discrimination if you are not deceived by the mirage; it is the want of intensity in your desire for water that has saved you from the illusion".

Following the metaphor suggested by the word verbalization the poet tells us that it is our speech that turns the dynamic into the static and specializes it by a conceptual handling.

## VI. Bedil: The News from Nowhere



Against postmoderns who find nihilism an issue because they think there is no news from somewhere or nowhere (of the Transcendent), Bedil's staple diet is the news from Nowhere or the Netherland of Spirit that his teacher in Sufism helped made more accessible. Against those who complain that God is on leave or inaccessible (Kafka), absent (Heidegger), irrelevant (Beckett), or dead (Camus and Sartre) and thus counsel us to stay loyal to the earth and not heed the reports from the otherworld (Nietzsche) Bedil would maintain that the Beloved does speak albeit behind the veil. However, his intimations or symbols are everywhere, in every experience for the discerning heart. He had himself witnessed a number of miracles called *karamaat*. Nihilism follows the premise that there is no fount of unsullied joy, no illumination vouchsafed that clears all fog of doubt regarding one's transcendent destiny or pole. Bedil had been witness to many such things that the postmodern eclipse of transcendence seems to make incredulous. However, the argument of those who are haunted by nihilism can be better met not by invoking personal witness of the things from the "other world" but by arguing that one can and one has access to the Silence, can read the text of Silence that transforms one into an "authentic" being who is open to the revelations of Being. What Heidegger achieves by his call for thinking and poetry is what Bedil achieves through his call for love, and in Eastern traditions, love is the unity of the knower and known or has a cognitive aspect; love reaches the other. Moreover, a relationship with the other/Nature or a dialogue between I and Thou is what redeems man. God is Love. The Sacred is Silence; its depths and heights conceal a joy, a serenity of Spirit. Furthermore, nihilism is overcome by the Beloved meeting, by being open to the Call of the Other, by being receptive, by negating the ego that seeks some other meaning than the meaning one discovers when the ego recedes to the background. What else than love, mystery, wonder, freedom, beauty, joy, and longing constitute the heart of all those men have treasured and through which religious and mystical traditions have given meaning to lives.

Bedil speaks of the garden, of music, of beauty, of intoxication of love, and he gets access to them by opening himself up to reality/Reality, by transcending the cunning of the conceptual intellect that posits dualities that separate or push us to the narrow cocoon of the self-failing to love, and that is what constitutes hell from which great modern and postmodern thinks to seek an exit. No dualisms, no need to comprehend but a drive to dissolve in the Mystery, embrace life and love unconditionally without imposing conditions conceptual intellect or Faustian attitude demands. As Bedil puts it:

An intellect that knew black from white,  
 Don't believe that it knew God's mystery  
 As it needed to be known. I spoke a word  
 But only after I attained perfection:  
 You will comprehend when you don't comprehend (Bedil 1963: 206, S. R. Faruqi's  
 trans.).

To a fulfilled heart, there are no questions, no complaints, no fears. Whether Bedil believed in resurrection after death is beside the point. He lived the “unseen” world – the higher world – invoked in mystics and artists. Prophets have brought the news from the nowhere land of spirit, of love, of living for the other that is redemption. Jesus is love. Mystics or saints live the station of love. The following Bedil verses sums it up so lucidly and beautifully:

My tears are the ink of my writings  
 Nothing can stop my writing  
 Words coming from the thumping of my heart  
 Listen to the joyous ache of love  
 No regret when the heart is intoxicated  
 Intellect will never grasp the truth  
 Glimpses of this world confuses the intellect  
 Forget yesterday and tomorrow  
 A good today will be a good tomorrow  
 Listen to the message  
 Expose the truth  
 You are the truth  
 You are not the one in the mirror  
 You are the unity of both worlds.

Another verse complements the theme.

In your language printed the meaning of the firmaments Why do you not understand your own truth?

The author thinks anxieties of a host of skeptical thought currents, of Heidegger and Derrida and all those who fail to buy theological accounts on face value but appropriate some mystical account in their secularized views are here engaged with by the representative of *sabk-i hindi* school. It is an art that is rather preeminently and relatively unproblematically portal to a certain kind of transcendence in the secular world. Moreover, artworks like those of *sabk-i hindi* school have a special value for postmodern Indian subcontinent thought in particular and the world in general. Their uniqueness lies in their critical accounts of received or popular exoteric theological accounts (Ghalib’s critique of various theological concepts is unmatched in both boldness and wit and in being quite extensive), subtlety (Bedil and Ghalib, for instance, are extremely subtle in advocacy of even the hallowed theme of love as they display sensitivity to contradictions in usual accounts that link love with unalloyed joy in transcendence, “a pervasive undercurrent of intellectual skepticism which prevents the reader from experiencing the kind of ecstasy or exuberance imparted, e.g., by Rūmī’s *ġazals*.”) Furthermore, rich resources of linguistic and formal features of poetry make it preeminent (the house of Being). Faruqi notes “a profound philosophical skepticism (in modern times these antipathies in the thought of Bīdel

influenced Gāleb and Eqbāl) in discussing with new vigor and freshness traditional Sufi topics, such as the origin of man, the creation of the world, and the relationship between God, the universe, and man" (Faruqi: 2003). And it is this "skepticism" that makes Bedil especially interesting for the typically skeptical mood in (post) modern nihilist writing.

Any experience that defies comprehension or seems outrageous and in nihilistic mood can readily cite a verse of great Persian poets, particularly of Bedil, Ghalib, Urfi, and the like. As Shamsur Rahman Faruqi noted in connection with poetical works of *sabk-i hindi*: "These texts are at once a theory of language and a theory of poetry, and it is not perhaps accidental that they remind us of Bhartrihari" (Faruqi: 2003). Bedil's value lies in deconstructing received formulations and formulating new ones and echoes a Wittgensteinian maxim of doing away with the ladder as one climbs up. Faruqi's excellent summing up of distinctive elements of *sabk-i hindi* below shows why Bedil and his ilk could be important in current discussions in philosophy of language and mysticism and what has been the central interest in (post)modern aesthetics – art vis-a-vis transcendence. Communication and comprehension are not the same; silence has a speech of its own, purer and closer to Truth, language often lets the poet down; the poet's speech is not everyday speech; it needs to be interpreted; the speech of philistines comes nowhere near the poet's speech. These propositions are an important part of the poetics of *sabk-i hindi*, and are some of the chief reasons why this poetry sounds so unfamiliar to an ordinary reader of Iranian-Persian poetry.

Heideggerian echoes can be heard in Bedil's long philosophical prose work *Chahar Unsur* ("The Four Elements") and masnavi *Irfan* (Gnosis), besides in countless verses where he dwells on the theme of the textual or linguistic structure of the cosmos. The word (*sukkhān*), according to Bedil, constitutes "the soul of the universe and the true principle of the reality of the existing things. When the word strives in the path of concealment of meaning-reality, it is like a whole world locking its breath in its breast. Moreover, when it boils over to reveal the text, it is a whole world growing up and rising upon it." (Bedil 1963-64: 196). For Bedil, knowledge becomes knowledge thanks to the word. The word encompasses even silence. Poetry unveils. Reality and word do the unveiling. According to him, as according to Ibn Arabi, language can be a portal to transcendence. He follows Sufi metaphysics of language according to which (as formulated in Ibn Arabi corpus) the world is a work endowed with rhyme and rhythm. Fundamental principles of poetry are divinely instituted. How different and refreshing these views are in the atmosphere of profanation and trivialization of language and literature. Language is indeed the house of Being. The Prophet is referred to as the Master of language and the holder of the 'sum of words' (*jawāmi' al-kalim*) in Islamic tradition, and Ibn Arabi keeps on returning to this point. Poetry – the wisdom poetry really – could indeed point the way to the holy. God, Sufis keep on reiterating, is a cosmic artist, the principle of Beauty and Harmony. God is Beauty, and everything is there to love this Beauty. Poetically encountering the Real is what the key practice of *zikr* aims at. Sufis are

"romantic" poets who see the Face of the Beloved everywhere as they have transcended the narrow circuit of personality and contemplate the countenance of the Friend. Art is essentially the transcendence of personality, as Eliot noted. Both art and religion are essentially contemplation. In a world where art has little to do with Beauty, as Ananda Coomaraswamy lamented, there exists neither great art nor religion, and the great priest and poet of Divine Beauty Ibn' Arabî is direly needed. Furthermore, this can be possible by understanding a deeper view of language, its cosmic and metaphysical underpinnings explored in Ibn Arabi's *Futuhaat* and elsewhere. "Discovering the truth is the reason we are here in this world; we can never give up on the truth. We will be miserable living a life filled with lies and deceptions."

#### VII. Ecstatic Aesthetic View of Existence

Art has always offered ecstasy, sublimity. Art has celebrated epiphanic moments. Existence can be justified only in aesthetic terms, argued Nietzsche. One might ask what other terms have been advocated by mystical traditions other than aesthetic. Are not mysticism and poetry as interfused and embodied in Persian poets and *sabk-i hindi* fundamentally part of a project of aestheticizing experience? Isn't self-transcendence or detachment from egoic passions or self-reference the key to ananda or joy in any experience? Isn't love (even its flowering in compassion in nirvana or other value-directed modes of existence) valued fundamentally because it partakes of the joy of the Spirit? The secret of morals, as Shelley rightly noted in his *Defense of Poetry*, love. The secret of love is a movement of the Spirit that leaps in joy at the symbols or footprints of the Beloved. The secret of beauty is its attractive power that drives one on while we seek fuller or deeper realizations of the life of Spirit. Consciousness, knowledge or gnosis and joy – joy resulting from certain attitude or perception towards things or other are inseparable. That explains why we can assert that aesthetic and playful view of existence is a common postulate in spiritual traditions, including spiritual-poetic tradition represented in *sabk-i hindi*.

In the world cast into stormy intoxication by your eyes  
 My self-abandonment but a ripple in the wine  
 The beautiful dream of existence upon me, oblivious I lie, but know  
 Anyone speaking your name my quiescence breaks  
 In my oblivion I traversed many a house of beauty  
 Even a false step in your desire became the masterstroke of Behzad  
 If the enchantment of your promise such flavor has  
 We shall find a leisure unbounded by a tomorrow

Bedil is for defamiliarization that comes from what we may call the station of wonder. Nothing is repeated in the divine scheme; every moment is a new revelation. Sufi tradition has endlessly meditated on this theme, and we find Ibn Arabi returning

to it time and again in his work. Art owes its enchantment to what Russian formalists called defamiliarization, and the magic of creative activity is itself connected to the phenomenology of newness, of wonder. As Bedil puts it: "Upon need at a stranger's door prostrate but raise not your solicitous gaze to a familiar face" (M. A. Farooqi trans.)

### Conclusion

Indo-Persian Poetic-mystical tradition in general and *sabk-i hindi* in particular have been wedded to an understanding of self and other, man and transcendence, beauty and love, language and Being, that can be shown to ally with the postmodern project of overcoming nihilism in many ways. Radical critiques of self as a subject from Lacan on the one hand and from Nietzsche and Heidegger and those who have been invoking them and invoking more immanent and rather impoverished versions of transcendence through more secular ideals and activities and what remains of transcendently oriented notions of art, play, friendship, gift, privileging the other, work, etc. in their quest of secular salvation may be appreciated in light of subtle poetic vision predominantly formulated in immanent terms (in soul ravishing poetry) but pointing ever to transcendent pole in our experience of beauty, love, joy, art or poetry and other intimations of the Sacred we find in major poets of *sabk-i hindi* including Bedil we have dealt here. To conclude with Bedil's verses that talk about the vulnerability of love and inaccessibility of unveiled beloved in this *samsara* but the faith in prerogative to break free of every bondage including the bondage of existence, the curse of thisness and thatness, unbounded freedom of imagination, and relinquishing of all mental constructions regarding this and that world that smell of duality and lastly humility to be mere receptivity of servanthood and rare contentment to be seeking meaning at the human plane – maintaining dignity that our Sartre and Camus seek in their own ways – and relinquishing seeking the moon in a world where indifference of beauty or the Beloved has killed countless souls.

But for her coquettish gaze wrapped in its veiling  
Of all needs of concealment my Laila was free

Only the word heard through the veil, no audience with the heart had I  
How to disclose what I did not see, the mirror-maker you should ask

Regard the spring painted with hues of new secrets  
What your imagination never held the spring carries

It is the time to mourn the vulnerability of love  
the flame that in my soul no kindling found and was extinguished

Hand-wringing may only cleanse the pollution of two worlds  
Freedom is to rid one of even a purity akin to the pearlís

I said, of my connection with existence what to make  
The Free of Spirit answered, Break!

Refrain from all greed Bedil, if it is dignity you seek  
These two images no mirror together reflects

In contentment is dominion seek not the sun and the moon  
If a bread and lamp in night rations has been provided you.  
(M A Farooqi's trans.)

Oh, what a multitude of mirrors Tormented by the pain of beauty's indifference  
Turned to ashes under the rust and did not Realize their essential luminance.  
(Bedil, Nikat, p. 116., S. R. Faruqi's trans.)

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