

## **Freedom and Sufism a Brief Analysis on Freedom Concept in the View of Muslim Mystics**

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### **Abstract**

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Freedom is a concept that mystics, politics, and political philosophers granted an especial attention to its nature and identity. In the work of Muslim, the interpretation of freedom and liberty has been repeated several times in its moral-conductive meaning and visible and invisible barriers and the way of freedom from bondages are represented. In this paper, the writer firstly introduces types of freedom and represents several definitions of it based on Muslim mystics' view point. In the second chapter, he attempts to compare different definitions of freedom with similar concepts and subjects like servitude and Sufism and comments about their relation. In the present chapter, it is shown that freedom is not conflict with servitude or Sufism, but also they have same meanings. In other words, words of Muslim mystic prove that achievement to Sufism and real servitude is not possible without achievement to freedom and independency; but for most of mystics there is no relation between freedom and few of them that considered liberty as freedom from gods rules and commands have been criticized theoretically and practically by great mystics.

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**Keywords:** Freedom, Mystics, Internal Freedom, External Freedom, Servitude, Sufism

### **Preface**

Freedom is a likable and admirable word and is a concept that understanding it or achieving to it has been a permanent mental challenge of humans.

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Therefore, people represented diverse or even opposite definitions and interpretations about it. It's not essential to remind this fact that among expansive political and social concepts, freedom is relatively new subject emerged in great intellectual and political evolutions, especially in western world and is related to modern political and governmental theories but it was not as broad as now in the past.

Defining the word "freedom" is not an easy tasking like other mental philosophical concepts. This word has been applied in meanings from past to present this plurality of and diverse usages caused a difficult understanding of its right meanings and sometimes there were maunder standings and conflict attitudes to word it. Thus, representing a unit and multilateral freedom is almost impossible, however late and present know ledgeables of represented diverse definitions that we mention some of them in this paper.

In human culture and a many late Muslims freedom concept had moral, spiritual and lingual meaning more than others that in the present argument, we consider its moral-mystical concept.

Now a day, when word freedom is used with out an adjective or suffix or a particular adverb, generally it has a sociological or a political meaning.

As a result, when it has an especial or non-social meaning, an adjective or an explanation accompanies it in order to eliminate common a mboguities, like spiritual or moral freedom, philosophical freedom, freedom in the thought of spokesmen or freedom in the view of mystics.

It should be mentioned that late know ledgeables and thinkers contemplated about concept meaning of freedom that some of the meanings have more harmony with new de finitions and some of them are practical more or less. There fore, regarding to these differnces, for having perfect under standing of this concept, it's necessary to examine freedom in different dimensions and aspects and by gaining more knowledge about it's usages, functions and objectives among different people and nations we can achieve to more cognition a bout it's diverse and paradoxical concepts.

In the present argument, we do not examine concept of freedom based on different attitudes of modern society and not in political-social sense and since previous mystics did not reveal a bright thought or a particular theoretical guidance for freedom and liberty toward the cruelties that were imposed them by power full governors.

This subject can have different social, cultural, mental or conductive reasons that how ever, it has the capacity of a comprehensive research, but the present article doesn't intend to discuss about it presently.

1. Internal freedom, external freedom and their relation in a general classification, we candivide freedom in to two concepts of "internal freedom" and "external freedom" the intention of internal freedom that we can name it as internally and doesn't have any inter ferences for doing his acts and achieving to freedom and salvation .

It means that immoral and wordy belongings do not prevent him from his spiritual conduct.

External freedom which has a very moral-mystical definition in comparison to the definition of internal freedom means freedom and liberty from bondages and troubles that bind human in the luxurious and sensual world.

Freedom in this sense means freedom from social obstacles, cruel governors and every kind of bondage or external stress that is considered as a barrier for humans free will, thought or behavior in his individual and social conduct.

Some of modern knowledgeable classified freedom in to two types "negative freedom" and "positive freedom" that we can examine them both from moral and political outlook.

Ayzaya Berlin, contemporary open-minded knowledgeable, gives a definition of a negative political freedom as this: political freedom in it's negative sense means a dominion in which the person can do whatever he wants and others cannot prevent him".(Berlin 1268:237)

In the moral meaning of negative freedom, we can say that: "freedom liberty from obligations and bondages of daily life. The person owns his wealth and any body who serves an other one except himself is not a freeman. (Socrates)". ( Rozental, 1379:157) and in negative definition: "freedom is release from evil, an evil which prevents human from achievement to his real and humanistic objective.

Prevention of doing evil acts those humans does them means freedom: it is hard for human to be free; while he is submitted to doing bad acts regularly. "(Fisaghores) (Rozental, 1379:158).

But positive freedom can also be described in both moral and political terms. In positive definition. "moral freedom means an acceptable human wish. " freedom means that human serves morality constantly and the degree of his service, determines rang of his freedom; since a person who don't do a right work, is not free" (Socrates) (Rozental, 1379:156).

As we see, positive freedom is similar to the concept " freedom in" : "the concept of positive freedom don't mean being freedom but means being free in, and living in a permitted and prescribed manner... meaning of positive freedom arises from personal desire of the person to be his lord and he wishes that he directs his own life and all decisions that he makes though life..." (Berlin, 1368:249-250).

An other method for recognition and examination of freedom is through recognition of opposite and conflict concepts and meanings. Opposite concepts of freedom either in positive or negative sense, inner or external sense means to be imprisoned and entangled.

Based on this definition "freedom means lack of obligations ... but since obligations are varied, freedom forms are varied also." (Corneston, 1359:164).

From the mentioned definitions, it's derived that word freedom is more than a literal subscription and not perceiving it's contrast similarity causes wrong – headed ness, misunderstanding and many misuses in the past and modern era.

Ayzaya Berlin believes that: "denying of ascetics' soul is perhaps known as source of spiritual purity and power. But it's difficult to consider it as progress in the way of achievement to freedom". (Berlin, 1368:48)

It means that sense of freedom which is created inside by the person or the other is the opposite of political freedom (Berlin,1368:48) he also believes that we should separate spiritual freedom from more basic concept of freedom, other wise in the name of freedom, we may encounter to some dangers like amazement or tolerating cruelty( Berlin,1368:260-261).

How ever, internal and external freedoms are not irrelevant to each other. It means that if external freedom or freedom from cruel governors or other troubles does not accompany with internal freedom and growth of spirituality, it is not a multilateral freedom and perhaps it loses the primary values of a perfect freedom, it means that perhaps human accepts alien forces and troubles or may consider them desirable by resorting to other definitions or meanings.

From the other side. We can say that if the possibility and talent of internal freedom does not prove by the help of external and political freedom, it's not a complete freedom.

According to interpretation of a knowledgeable: a firm faith and free will as not guaranteed without responsible humanistic freedom and "external humanistic freedom is the condition on of gaining internal freedom". (Mojtahed Shabestari, 1376:8).

An other argument which is relevant to the present discussion is that dealing extremely with internal freedom can be the unpleasant result of not dealing with internal freedom. It means escaping to an internal wall for being immune or escaping from external obstacles.

Based on fluent interpretation of Berlin, some times repression of self or being indifferent to the outside world is a kind of retreat or refuge in an internal castle and also some times being disappointed from way of justice and freedom tempts the person for retreat to inside (Rozenal, Berlin, 1368:255).

This well-know knowledgeable believes that we can think about gratification of freedom sense by two different ways but opposite. One way is dealing with it and satisfying those wishes and the other is eliminating them, escaping from them or neglecting them.

Eric forum, another open-minded thinker represents ideas about different motivations and of humans in escaping from freedom in his "Escape from freedom" book and also he comments about way of conduct from negative to positive freedom.

## **2. A Hint to the Meaning and Definition of Freedom in the View of Muslim Mystics**

Among Muslims, concept of freedom has different cosmological and sociological meanings; it means that in our culture "freedom" has been used both in fighting to slavery, captivity and being imprisoned that it has sociological and juridical connotation and also in opposing force and passivity which has lingual- philosophical meaning.

But the description and definition of freedom that mystics represented frequently is not proportion to political- social concepts of freedom and even we can say that word freedom here is considered as a literal subscription, however, we can define relations among different meanings (Rozenal, 1379:168).

As the definitions of Sufism is several and different and based on the interpretation of one knowledgeable, there are definitions equal to the number of Sufis, it can be said that if we consider Sufism equal to unique freedom, again there are many definitions of freedom of mystic writers and introducers of mystical concepts, then we examine the relativity of mystical freedom with similar concepts.

In primary mystical and non- mystical works, the equal word of freedom is "Horiyat" that even is used in Persian works until centuries "Horiyat" has a high status among

Mystics that some times they dedicated a chapter of their mystical works to it. some times in these works or other cultural works, instead of using word " Horiyat", the person who has this status "Hor" is used.

Imam Ghashiri, knowledgeable mystic and great mystical writer of fifth century dedicated a chapter of his valid treaties to this subject and mentioned some words of Sufis about it and according to their opinion; "Horiyat" means freedom of heart from bondage to all creatures.

... In addition, what they call it as "Horiyat" is that human doesn't belong to any thing neither what is in this world nor hereafter world. (Ghashiri, 1376:343)

Mystic and knowledgeable writer, Abomozafar Ghotboldin Ebadi wrote about this status in his "Sofinameh" book and criticizes some of doubts and misunderstandings about it.

In his definition, "Horiyat" is freedom from bondages that there is the possibility to be free from them.

"Be a ware that the reality of Horiyat is freedom from bondages and releasing from these obligations. Some times is possible and some of them should exist forever". (Ardshir Ebadi, 1268:216)

In "Jorjani definitions" book, Horiyat is avoiding from slavery and disbanding interests that it has some stages:

"Horiyat in terms of mystics is avoiding from slavery and breaking up all interests and alien forces and it has stages:

General freedom (from slavery of lusts), special freedom from slavery of wishes because their wishes destroy in Gods wish and most specific freedom which is freedom from slavery of costumes because they destroy in Gods manifestation" (Jorjani; 1368: 38)

In "Kashaf Alestahalat va Alfonon" book, freedom means disbanding heart from all worldly belongings:

"So human achieves to the stage of freedom when he neglects all worldly luxuries and not to have any freedom world since everything you are is its bondage, you are slave of that thing." (Tahanavi; 1984: 291/1-292)

But Azizaldin Nasafi, great mystic and writer of seventh century in his lofty work, *perfectman*, introduces a free man and expresses his features. In order to not lengthening our argument, we quote main ideas glancingly.

Based on his view point, firstly a free man is a person who is free from lust of womb, cunt and from friendship to wealth, property and second, this freedom is a relative matter and because of the multiplicity and diversity of bondages, there is not an absolute freedom.(Nasafi; 1377:133)

That have eight things completely: good speech, good acts, good temper and knowledge, leaving material luxuries aside, seclusion, and contentment.(Nasafi; 1377:77)

He believes that freedom is a feeling in heart that in this state the person doesn't become happy or unhappy by giving or taking a kind of material gift, but a person who used to these habits cannot be free .(Nasafi; 1377:187)

In another chapter of " *perfect man*" book, the writer introduces puberty and freedom of human and briefly expresses that achievement to primary wisdom causes achievement to puberty but achievement to the stage of a free man is possible only by disconnecting from affections or different material wishes and even sermon teaching, closure to God and prophecy all become possible .(Nasafi; 1377:180)

Nasafi exactly reminds some different concepts of freedom and servitude with other doubts that other mystics attention less it them and believes that eliminating essential requirements is not an obstacle for achievement to freedom, but what ever the person wants and it causes a kind of belonging, that thing becomes an idol, even that wish or desire is having a shabby cloth.

A freedom is a person who does not have any bondage or belonging or an idol. (Nasafi; 1377:180-181)

Ultimately, Nasafi knows a wise free man best of all creatures all and writes: " a free wise man is best of all creatures and all creatures are under his guidance and supervision.

He sees every thing in its right place and know every thing in it's own stage and doesn't fight with any one and anything and is free from all people and doesn't never disagree but always agree with every one" (Nasafi; 1377:284)

According to previous definitions that we quoted from knowledgeable of different eras, it is obvious that freedom or by Ibn Arabis interpretation: "Horiyat"

Is a state that more and before every thing refers to heart and it has harmony with other states like servitude, satisfaction and submission.

In the following selection of article, it is proper to examine relativity between these concepts of mystics. However, we do not intend to examine non-mystical concepts of freedom. How ever, this argument should be examined extensively and some times mystics mentioned some of these concepts by purpose of introducing freedom from their outlook. Relation of freedom with some similar concepts and subjects.

### 1-3 Freedom and Servitude

One of basic concepts and meanings of freedom in mystical texts and quotations of mystics is considering this concept similar to the concept of servitude based on mystics' viewpoint, and there is a paradoxical expression definition that freedom is servitude or servitude is freedom.

This meaning is repeated many times in articles and quotations of mystics.

Based on these definition, freedom and servitude are essential for each other and both of them give meaning to one another; it means that the prerequisite of Gods servitude freedom from others servitude, the person achieves to Gods servitude and also fulfills to reality and maturity of freedom:

- "And Ahmad khozroyeh said: all servitude is in freedom and in the achievement to servitude, freedom will be prefect". ( Attar, Bita: 293/1)
- "And Joneyd Baghdadi said: there should be servitude left in your nature in order to achieve to the reality of freedom". ( Attar, Bita: 24/2)

- "Hossein Ibn Mansour says: Every one who wants freedom, say him to serve God constantly". ( Ghashiri; 1379:343)
- " Boshir Hafi says that: Every one who wishes to experience freedom should purifies his nature by God. Hossein Ibn Mansour says: Every one who achieves to stages of servitude, will reach to complete freedom and this is the status of prophets and saints". ( Attar, Bitā: 334)
- A dervish asked our sage that what servitude is. Our sage replied: your God created you as a freedom so be free. Dervish said: my question is about servitude. Our sage replied that: if you don't be free from world's belongings, you can not serve God". By these descriptions and definitions that we mentioned a few number of them, it can be concluded that for Sufis, reality and maturity of freedom is reality and maturity of servitude and we can achieve to more servitude by more freedom and from the other side, everyone who fulfills to reality and maturity of servitude is " the free man of his land", since "freedom is the ultimate of servitude" (Tahavani; 1984:292/1. Quoted from Majāe solauk)

In other words, the proportion, percept and level of freedom and servitude is related to each other: who ever is free, serves more and who ever serves God makes use of freedom more. From the outlook of mystics, the person who searches real freedom should hold the rope of servitude firmly and wish full of a pure servitude should release himself from every dependency wish except God. But what is important to a mystic is achieving to the stage of servitude and what ever is the condition and necessity of conduct. In this stage, regarding to inter predations and different usages of freedom and servitude, it is proper to imply these two concepts have several samples in political- mystical inter predations.

### 2-3 Freedom and Sufism

Based on the stand point of mystics not only freedom is not in conflict with Sufism, but also both of them are identical and even both of them are essential for each other, from one side Sufism is freedom from dependencies and from the other side, a person who has achieved to the maturity of freedom and liberty is the Sufi or mystic. As a result, some of great Sufis considered Sufism and freedom identical and call Sufism as freedom..." and Abihossein nouri said: Sufism is freedom. Chivalry, and generosity". (Atter; Bitā: 55/2)

Once our sage [Bosaeed] said: this Sufism is freedom in servitude (Ibn Monavar; 1376; 289/1)

Definition of Sufism and freedom is considered identical that the intention an ultimate of both concepts is same. The intention of mystic from freedom is freedom from material affairs that considers the disconnection the introduction and prerequisite of connection and dependency God and his intention from Sufism is achievement to the state of freedom and liberty material luxuries.

An other famous definition of Sufism, which means “leaving affection” and also means that being a Sufi needs to leave every kind of dependency or interest.

In the mind of Sufis, the major affection and dependency is danyeling itour selves or other visible or interests. A Sufi person can achieve to the reality of Sufism by leaving this affair and releasing from every kind of dependency and interest Sanayi in his sublime odes interest all mystics to freedom from two types of dependencies. In noble Masnavi book, the basis of all problems is in traduced as dependency and mystical teaching of Molavi reminds this point the intial part of his book.

Throughout Masnavi; Molana introduces different internal and external bondages and teaches disconnecting from interests and achievement to freedom and guides addressees to Gods closure step by step.

Sufism in the sense of freedom is an excuse for the wayfarer to learn his specific conductive – moral lessons and introduces disconnecting from bondages as a way that is ultimate and maturity of Sufism.

- “And Abdollah khabigh said: every one who wants to be a Sufi should disconnect his heart from every interest in order to be free”. ( Attar; Bita: 4/2)
- “And sage Ali Rodbari said: the narrowest jail is friendship to wetched people”. ( Attar; Bita: 288/2)
- “And Abolghasem nase Abadi sald: yor prison is your body and when you exit from it’s bondage you become free. ( Attar; Bita: 317/2)

Moreover, Nasafi considers a freeman who is free from lusts, wealth and dignity and has maturities like good speech, behavior and temper.

Regarding to what is said concept of freedom (Sufism) is similar to previous meaning which is servitude. Since in this concept, as Bosaeed said "Sufism is freedom in servitude" and Sufi is the servant of freedom that nothing keeps him in bondage and he is in bondage of nothing except God:

" freedom is that human keep himself away from the servitude of all creatures and what ever exists except God, he doesn't love them ( Ghashiri; 1379:342)

### 3-3 Freedom and Ebaheh

In the thought of popular and acceptable mystics, real freedom is synonym to servitude and dependency to God, but by the interpretation of realists and liar Sufis that they didn't hear anything from reality of mystical freedom except a name , they prescribed some rules for freedom that indeed this kind of freedom is exactly in conflict to mystical freedom , servitude and Sufism.

Perhaps , the great emphasis or perseverance of real Sufis on that there is no difference between servitude and freedom is a kind of response to the people who seeks for freedom from religious rules and traditions and didn't find a better litter that this common and paradoxical concept of freedom. A litter and roadster that is used for "Ebaheh ".

On the other side, it's supposed that some easy going Sufis followed "Ebaheh" because of their ignorance, or mistake or misusing some of freedom's concepts or advantage. Anyway, the consequence of these thoughts and action was that is arouses the protest and objection of Sufism opponents.

In the interpretation of professor Forozanfar, freedom is maturity of uprightness and absolute servitude to god.

<< it doesn't involve rights or duties but some of Sufis that were named as " Ebahati " or " Ebahiyeh" believed that human achieves to a stage that he can be free from the suffer age of religious laws and the reality of freedom for them is freedom from whatever restricts human ..... "(Forozanfar, 1367:25)

Since past days , real Sufism or its know ledgeables by indication to this kind of ignorant thoughts represented responses and blocked misuse way of these great spiritual concepts for instance , Abinasr Seraj Tosi , author of famous Allameh book , wrote a chapter about introducing and criticizing " Ebahiyeh " ideas and defines servitude by referring to different instances of Qor'an and narratives and considers it as freedom from everything except god.

He writes:

An ignorant group supposed that name of freedom is more perfect than servitude as it was common among people that a free man has a higher dignity in world than others. Thus , they perverted from right way and assumed that human remains as a servant since the relation between him and god is servitude and when he achieves to god's joiner , he becomes free and when he becomes free there is no sign of servitude in him indeed , because of the ignorance of this group they perverted in religion principles this tribe believed that slave doesn't become a slave in reality , unless his heart become free from all things except god and this is the time that he becomes a real slave of god and doesn't choose a better name than slave for these people. It's narrated that our holy prophet said: god gave me the choice to choose one between begin a king prophet or a slave prophet ... Than I choose to be a slave prophet, and god granted both of them to him". (Seraj, 1960:537-532)

Furthermore, Ghashiri considers the idea of freedom from religious rules and functions opponent to the reality of freedom and knows as heresy:

"Professor Imam Says: reality of freedom is in the maturity of servitude, since he is honest in servitude, he is free from bondage of others ". (Ghosheiri, 1376:342)

Moreover, Tahanavi one of translators of mystics thoughts calls this group as pagan and atheist and introduces freedom as freedom of person from being slave of his soul and distancing hardship of pray from him (Tahanovi, 1984; 292/1)

This group misunderstands the reality and knows freedom in servitude as freedom from servitude, obligation and religious laws that most of Sufi researchers denies their opinion and has shown that freedom means maturity of servitude and freedom from others.

Criticism of "Mohahi" Sufis and denying their behavior are apparent in works of Sufism and work of Sufism opponents that was an excuse for dissenters in order to deny Sufism.

## **Conclusion**

What was mentioned in this paper was expressive of this fact concept of freedom was exposed to the regard and attention of most Sufis and thinkers and they represented sublime theories about its meanings, limitations, functions and methods.

Among all dominant ideas of Muslim mystics, it is derived that they represented a moral – conductive meaning from freedom practically and theoretically and opposed to "Mobahi" Sufis that introduced an opposite meaning about freedom and suppressed misunderstanding by their arguments and theories. In concluding definitions of mystics, we can say that in their opinion, freedom is disconnecting from servitude and slavery and distances every kind of wish and interest whether in this world or hereafter world in the way of god's servitude and achievement to him. In other words, in this mystical concept , freedom agrees to both terms " freedom from " and " freedom in " : freedom from interests and wishes and anything or anybody except god and freedom in servitude , worshipping god and conduct.

## **Appendix**

1. In human history, almost all moralists praised freedom... meaning of freedom like meanings of other words welfare, goodness, nature and reality is so broad that can be adjusted to every kind of interpretation.( Berlin; 1368:236)
2. Korenston represented a voluminous argument about meanings of freedom in literal, conceptual and theoretical aspects in the first chapter of his " A Novel analysis on freedom" book (13-64) and mentioned different definitions of late and present knowledgeable and he himself classified some definition of other and divided types of freedom and progressive freedom ( freedom from bondages of nature, malady, hunger, insecurity, ignorance and superstition), Romantic freedom(freedom from) obligation of advanced political institutions, king, imperators, churches and from reasonable freedom and imposed reasonable freedom.
3. According to Berlin, freedom is: freedom in thee sense that I use it is not only disavowing in sufficiency and inability ( that in this sense you can achieve freedom by ruining and destroying wishes) but there should be some obstacles that are proped between human and facilities of his election and action).

In another part of his book (269p), Berlin writes: freedom is province on soul and eliminating or desugesting barriers in the way of human desires perhaps these barriers exist in different from like natural barriers, internal barriers are related to subjective libertine lusts. Barriers arised from social objection and troubles asised from others wishes and be havior.

3. Eric forum introduces two main way for escaping freedom in society:  
"In fascist governments being submitted to a leader and in our democracy the obsession for being like other". (Eric forum, 137:174)
4. Refer to "escape from freedom" book (147&153pp) that from indicates that for domina ting on in ability and lonliness of disconnecting from external interests.

We should tend to love, work and realistic expressions of emotional, sensational and intellectual reasonings.

5. It is not eworthy to mention that although most of our mystics haven't used freedom social concepts, they taught freedom and distancing from rulers obligation in their speech, be haviour and action.
6. From speeches of lofty professor and knowledgeable, Doctor Shafiee Kadkani.
7. (Joroani, 1369:38)
8. It's essential to remind that concept of freedom is not only related to the arguments that are presented in this article, but has direct or indirect relations the subjects like needlessly, way farer, doom and survival, submission and satisfaction and especially force and liberty that writer doesn't engage himself in these subjects.
9. Sometimes mystics mention different meanings of the concepts freedom and servitude by skill and taste of a esthetics and using other meaning or anagram.

It is quoted that there was a richman in a corps and often he said to sheikh to accept something of this material world but he did not. Finally, hesent amessenger to Sheikh that I released several slaves and granted its spiritual reward to you. Sheikh said: our religion is not releasing slaves but is free slavery to God. ( Attar: 297/2). Further more in "Alameh" book, he attended to the juridical- social meaning of freedom. (Seraj, 1960:531)

10. Ein Alghozat opinion in interpreting the relation between servitude and freedom is pleasant and readable: "if you don't be a slave, you wont be free... once people asked a sage that what is servitude? He said: hey way farer, if you don't become free, you won't be slave". (Tamhidat, Einalghozat, quoted from Gohareyan, 1368:198/4)
11. For familiarity to Molina's opinion about concept of freedom, obstacle and ways for achievement to it in Masnavi, article of Molavi and freedom, 1384:114-133.

12. These couplets can have the connotation of verses that God considers the duty of Holy prophet Mohammad to remove bondages and interests of people who follow him.

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