

Artistic Aesthetics in Islamic Philosophy

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ABSTRACT:

Allah created an entire universe in which many objects and their innate beauty define his praises. This sense of the beauty of nature is being elaborated in Islamic aesthetical art for many years. Aesthetic visual art in the Islamic paradigm is represented in terms of calligraphy, architecture, reflective sculpture, and Sufi music, etc. that show the pure love with Almighty. Figural representation of humans and animals is forbidden in Islam, so the philosopher relies on poetic and rhetoric ways to represent their feelings with Islam. This paper realized the aesthetics and beauty of Islamic culture according to the viewpoint of visual art that fulfills the philosophical needs of Muslims. The main objective behind this article is defining two folds aspects of aesthetics, in which religious aesthetics define perception and belief about Allah that transform from concepts to practical visual art.

KEYWORDS:

Aesthetics, Islamic Aesthetics, Islamic Art, Islamic Philosophy

Introduction

Aesthetic or sometimes esthetic is the philosophical study that describes the beauty and art of nature and its manifestations. Objects that feel pleasant by senses that express eternal forms in terms of peace, love, and hope, etc. philosophical esthetic also defines critical reflections of art as well as culture manifestation of art.

Islam basically is a World's second-largest religion which is called Abrahamic monotheistic religion it teaches that there is only one God "ALLAH" and all Muslims follow Muhammad ﷺ teachings "Sunnah" Who is the messenger of Allah. In Islamic culture, Muslims prohibits to portrait of Prophets ﷺ as they are respectful human beings and messengers of Allah. However, Ancient Muslim philosophers produced no specific visual aesthetic work, although their writing describes the nature of beauty regarding the course of discussions about Allah and his attributes in relation to his creation. Their deliberation of aesthetic art and creativity was inspired by the poetic and rhetoric way of Aristotle and Plato's views on literature and imitation. Allah has encouraged the people to observe

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the universe, which is created beautifully and harmoniously. Allah Almighty says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا
يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا
مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيِّحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

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“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason.”

In Surah Aal-e-Imran, Allah Almighty says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ²

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.”

The pure beauty of Islam is enclosed in its Holy book Qur’an which is the faith of Muslims. The Muslim philosopher describes the norms of the beauty of Islam by poetic and rhetoric style whereas Muslim artists believe that Qur’an is described the beauty of the whole universe which is the supreme gift of Allah to his followers. Islamic artists define their faith and believe in the form of Quranic text.

According to the hadith that defines the word ‘beautiful’ as:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَمِيلٌ يُحِبُّ الْجَمَالَ³

“Verily, Allah Himself is beautiful and loves beauty.”

Two folds of Islamic aesthetic:

Islamic aesthetic covers several subtopics that are influenced by artistic thoughts, their creation, feeling, expression of love, and beauty of Islam⁴. The aesthetical philosophy of art presents two folds aspects, conceptual-theoretical and material-practical.

In the conceptual-theoretical aspect, ideas, and concepts are related to original or abstract thought of everyday objects and perceptions. It is directly connected with mind thoughts that become art when looked at outside concerning with nature

and beauty⁵. Islamic conceptualization involved in the artwork take priority over tradition aesthetic, technical and material concern. Muslim philosophers present their religious concepts and ideology of Allah and beloved Prophets ﷺ by writing poem (Hamd-o-Naat) and kalam⁶. As well as they portray their soulful concepts toward Islam through art as visual aesthetics. Theoretical philosophy presents their theory govern scientific knowledge, the principles of human knowledge and thoughts, critic, nature and beauty, and historical subjects related to Islam⁷. As a standard rule, literary and poetic aesthetics have been studied more thoroughly and with a more consummate and reliable methodology than philosophical aesthetics. Islamic theoretical aesthetics can be divided into three themes: philosophy, literature including poetry and science.

In the material-practical aspect, ideas and concepts which is derived from conceptualization and theoretical aspects transform into some practical artwork. In the practical area of art, aesthetics describes both conceptual attributes of philosophical-metaphysical and phenomenological-physical. In immaculacy thinking, aesthetics covers the study of cognition perceptions including both culture and natural things. The Muslim philosophers described the beauty in their discussion, about the ALLAH and His attributes for creation⁸. So, in Islamic aesthetic, traditionally related to the faith-based metaphysics with Allah, His final aural revelation to humankind, His signs, Ayat, perceptible in the phenomenal world his creations. In Surah Al-Tin, Allah Almighty describes the creation of man and say:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ⁹

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature.”

As Almighty Allah also describes his creation of heaven as:

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ يُجْلِسُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ آسَاوِرٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ
ثِيَابًا خَضْرَاءَ مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَّكِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يُعْمَرُ الثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ

مُرْتَفَعًا¹⁰

“Those will have gardens of perpetual residence; beneath them rivers will flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade, reclining therein on adorned couches.”

عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٍ خَضْرَاءٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُوءٌ آسَاوِرٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَمُ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا¹¹

“Upon the inhabitants will be green garments of fine silk and brocade. And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink.”

Kant and Marx described the relationship between theory and practice in their logic but in the absence of theory somehow, they agreed on the blindness of practice. The theory of Islamic art did not deny this agreement and agreed on Morrison and Der Werf's editorial research¹². Islamic art is a theme of practical and theoretical investigation of Islamic culture based on justified knowledge where assumptions of philosopher thought regarding Qur'anic art and Allah faith should be ought indeed visual perception can be influenced in the artwork.

The theory of Islamic philosophy in art is represented as base ground, which is also called redefinition of aesthetic craft in terms of philosophy, and thus therefore methodologically based ideas are mapped from those theoretical services of aesthetics in the Islamic environment.

Ancient Aspects of Islamic Art:

Different religions have different styles to portray their faith and beliefs. Some make sculptures of their several idols some draw pictures of their holy persons to represent the philosophical art related to their culture. But in the Islamic religion, Islamic art followed some processes of art and style. First-time Islamic art was expressed in religious architecture by integrating artistic tradition in 688-692 CE, the first monument Dome of Rock in Jerusalem and then Umayyad great mosque of Damascus 706-716 CE, those artists followed only early designs of a patron but also the new aesthetic of Roman and Hellenistic culture. But Muslims needed a more aesthetic mode of Islam which satisfy the spiritual and contemplative nature of their religion, which was started with Abraham's monotheism.¹³

Islamic artworks are serious considerations and thoughts of Muslim spiritual depth and vulnerability onto concrete entities. The primordial age of Islamic art was influenced by some Christian, Roman, and Chinese art, which can be seen in painting pottery and textile. Particularly, the Pseudo-Aristotelian theology of Aristotle describes the nature and beauty of Allah and His attributes, and this compilation is based upon Enneads of Plotinus. The rhetoric and poetic work of Aristotle and literature and imitation views of Plato address the beauty of Islamic aesthetic art. Entirely, Islamic philosophers did not view visual art and literary imaginations as ends in themselves. To a certain extent their interest only in elaborating the relations of art activities.

Modern Aspects of Islamic Art:

Modern concepts of Islamic art shaped in the 19th century by art historians that describe the art that was originated in Arab land under the Islamic peoples that emerged from Arabia in the seventh century. In the modern epoch, Muslim artists environ Islamic visuals arts including

Islamic pottery, Islamic calligraphy, Islamic architecture, Islamic miniature, Islamic, and textile arts such as carpets and embroidery. These variables define the original aesthetics of Islamic art, which is represented in calligraphy, the architecture of the religious buildings (mosques), etc.

Architecture:

Islamic architecture is one of the best ways to present aesthetical love with Almighty Allah and His creations. Mosques are the prior place of worship for Muslims all over the world. That is the reason the reflection of faith and believes in Allah can be easily seen in mosque architecture in Muslim countries. The Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid an-Nabawī) was initially built of adobes, its roof of the leaves of date palms, and its pillars of the stems of date palms. But according to Sahih Al-Bukhari:

عُثْمَانُ فَرَّادَ فِيهِ زِيَادَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ وَبَنَى جِدَارَهُ بِالْحِجَارَةِ الْمَنْقُوشَةِ وَالْقَصَبَةِ
وَجَعَلَ عُمُدَهُ مِنْ حِجَارَةٍ مَنْقُوشَةٍ وَسَقَفَهُ بِالسَّاجِ¹⁴

“Uthman (R.A) changed it by expanding it to a great extent and built its walls with engraved stones and lime and made its pillars of engraved stones and its roof of teak wood.”

Significantly, aesthetic Islamic architecture and art are present with the help of motifs and ornamentations. Mostly, mosque designers portray the majestic look of the exterior and interior part of the mosque with Malaysian traditional architecture, in which domes, minarets, walls, and flooring designs and patterns according to the Islamic aesthetics¹⁵. According to Grabar¹⁶, it is important to understand first religious opinions and parameters and then transform concepts of decoration in Islamic art visualizations. The idea of adornment in Islamic art is supple in nature, free of forms material and scales.

Calligraphy:

The second and most influential Islamic art characteristic is Calligraphy. Basically, Islam is originated from Arab which is why Arabic calligraphy is the ultimate visual art that transformed the words of the Qur'an into visual art. Calligraphy is the art of joining letters that form some scripts either in Naskh, Kufic, or Thuluth. These scripts styles have different design patterns that apply to letters of words like overlapping, plasticized, bent, stretching, thickened and three-dimensional arabesques are followed.

According to Mahmood¹⁷ in his various research that Islamic calligraphy is not some art chunk that is easily be ignored but it's a wide and comprehensive detailed longhand design since several centuries that Muslims used in Mosques and sacred places. Arabic Calligraphy mostly

adapts from the Muslim's Holy book Al-Qur'an and Hadiths, which are pasted on the walls, entrance, and on the pillars of mosques. The precise meaning and message of the Qur'an and Hadiths are conveyed by the Arabic calligraphy with full of aesthetic value which fairly attract the people. Figural representation is prohibited in Islam that is the reason only words, blueprint patterns, and designs in the religious meaning of art can be seen in traditional engravings.

Sufi Music:

One of the most vital ingredients of Islamic aesthetic is Sufism which is kneaded by human art in Islamic culture which represents human reflexive purification, sensitivity, and sagacity in different formats.¹⁸ Muslims believe that they comprise two things body and soul. So, Sufis are Muslims whose body is Sharia, and the soul of Islam is called Sufism spiritually. Followers believe that Sufism is somehow a way of being close to Allah through self-meditation by listening or writing. The Sufi aesthetic is the way of presenting Allah's creature's beauty, love, and attraction in the form of a musical poem. It is also a study of mystical poetry which was introduced in the 13th century by the Shaikh-e-Akbar Mohi-ud-Din Ibn-e-Arabi and Fakhr al-Dīn Ibrahīm 'Irāqī in Sufi traditions¹⁹. Mostly, Sufis poets give the reasoning for music from different hadith like:

إِنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ قَيْسٍ أَوْ الْأَشْعَرِيَّ أُعْطِيَ مِزْمَارًا مِنْ مَزَامِيرِ آلِ دَاوُدَ ²⁰

“Abdullah b. Qais or al-Ash'ari has been gifted with a sweet melodious voice out of the voices of the family of David.”

According to another hadith,

زَيِّنُوا الْقُرْآنَ بِأَصْوَاتِكُمْ ²¹

“Make the Qur'an beautiful with your voices.”

As Prophets ﷺ said;

تَعَلَّمُوا كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَاهَدُوا وَتَعَنَّنُوا بِهِ، فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَهُوَ أَشَدُّ تَقَلُّتًا ²²

“Learn the Book of Allah and then take care of it and recite it in a beautiful voice.”

Sufi aesthetic in Islam basically called Tasawuf or Faqr with respect to its adherent Sufism for Muslims is the way of relaxation and purification of the inner soul by the help of beautiful poetic words that define the beauty of Allah.

Islam does not deny the characteristics of human nature; instead, it regulates them to a harmonic order. Like many aesthetic forms of arts, music is one of the melodious forms of human expression but with some limited restrictions according to Islam. Sufis understand and accept the influence of music and make use of this art exemplary ends as bounded by the basic moral and religious principles of Islam. Without a doubt,

written kalam or poetry (Ghazal) sings by melodious voice and harmonious instrumental music elevate the spiritual level of human beings in praise of Allah. In this context, Sufi music is the heart-touching Islamic influence music of the Sufis, in which famous Sufi poet like Bulleh Shah, Amīr Khusrau, and Khawaja Ghulam Farid defined their aesthetic philosophy in terms of poetry as it provides many positive vibes related to Islam.

Conclusion:

There is a connection between the Islamic disclosure and Islamic art. Allah is the source of all, and it might be said that the Islamic aesthetic is inspired by the Qur'anic verses and the Ahadith. Islam aesthetic has deeper meanings in art expression. An artistic way of manifestation provides a better understanding related to Islam and Islamic philosophy which deals with spiritual belongings and inner expression of a person. This paper promotes many comprehensive concepts that encapsulate all manifestation art processes. Therefore, it is the vital suggestion that all parameters which are uncovered in this paper play a crucial role in understanding aesthetic art based on well-known Islamic sources. Ancient and modern aspects of Islam symbolize the presence of a beautiful religion. Architecture, calligraphical representation in the house of Allah and sanctified places encounter the joy of beauty and inner relaxation of Muslim souls.

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