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Hell-Paradise Debate or Colloquy Turkish Sufi Ahmet Yesevi's Work Divan-ı Hikmet

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ABSTRACT

Ahmet Yesevi used debate or colloquy method which has examples in the form of poem or prose in Turkish literature while writing his work Divan-ı Hikmet. In this work by using this method he explained which one is superior paradise or hell and why one of them is superior basing on verses and hadiths. The reason why he chose debate method is there is a verse in the Quran in which hell talks and there is also a hadith said by prophet Mohammed in the same method. Main objective of Yesevi is to teach Islam's orders and principles to the people by basing on Quran and hadith, and to be able to make people love Islam. In our work we try to show how Ahmet Yesevi used verses and hadith and which verses and hadith he chose in his debate to reach his purpose.

KEYWORDS: Ahmet Yesevi, colloquy or debate, hell and paradise, verse, hadith

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INTRODUCTION

Debate, used with the same meaning as colloquy or dialog in Turkish Literature and penned to underline opposition via mutual discussion appear in the literary forms called “spring and winter, rose and nightingale, opium and wine, sword and pen debate” or as a book per se or chapter(s) of certain books such as “Candle and Luna Moth” in the book titled *İskendername* by Ahmedî or “Sun and Moon Debate” in the book titled *Divan* by Hayalî Bey.

It is understood from the literary debate between Spring and Winter in the “*Divanü Lugati't-Türk*” that this literary genre was well-rooted in the Turkish literature. As seen in poetic and/or prosaic moot examples from both folk literature e.g. Minstrel Ömer and Minstrel Şenlik* and divan literature e.g. *Beng ü Bade* by Fuzuli and *Münazara-i Tuti bâ-Zâğ* by Nev'î Yahya, people (conformist-ascetic, villager-towner, doctor-soothsayer etc.), nonhuman concrete beings (jasmine-violet, bow-arrow, date palm-grape etc.) or transcendent concepts (intellect-love, state-intellect, hope-despair) try to prove their superiority and certain specialties via dialogue.^{1 **}

In terms of the genre of debate for which examples can be multiplied, *Divan-ı Hikmet* authored by Ahmet Yesevi and assessed below is significant as it mentions about religious concepts including heaven-hell and has not been adequately reviewed in the relevant studies up to date.

The sources of *Divan-ı Hikmet* of Ahmet Yesevi's poetic work that has significant influences on Central Asian Turks and contain said topics from the religious and mystical perspectives is the Holy Quran and hadiths. As he stated in the entirety of the work, Ahmet Yesevi has said that his wisdoms in his *Münacat* (Invocation) are also the treasury of hadith and have composed of the meaning of Quran.²

My wisdoms are the source of hadith;
If not received grant, know that person is flagitious,
My wisdoms are the decrees of Allah,
If you read and understand meaning of the Quran.

HELL-PARADISE DEBATE OR COLLOQUY IN DİVAN-I HİKMET

Having consulted verses and hadiths, sometimes in terms of a text and sometimes in terms of meaning, Ahmet Yesevi has given place for too many subjects also through implication from worship to hypocrisy and from taking care of orphan to perjury in *Divan-ı Hikmet*. As for the topic of paradise and hell confronting us by the same procedure(s), the poet has discussed it/its many lines: Paradise/paradises and elements pertaining to them, for example, eight paradises, Daru's-selam, Firdevs, Adn, friends cutting out silk garments within paradise, to wear hulle garment (two-piece paradise garment) in the paradise, persons embracing the intercession of Hadarath Mohammad to be the resident of paradise, failure of liars in entering the paradise, those paying attention to their prayer to hope the heavenly home, Moslem judge (kadı) with whom people agree to obtain the heavenly home, paradise being saint authority, sherbet of four springs within heaven, pool of Kawthar (Kevser), virgins, gilman, pavilion, Great Angel of Paradise Ridvan; seven hells, self-ignition of hypocrites in hell, opening of hell gates to the loveless, the straight path being built across the hell, the state of arrogant in the hell, those who give

* See information and details discoursing poems in minstrel literature: Durbilmez, Bayram. *Âşık Edebiyatı ve Taşpınarlı Halk Şairleri*. Ankara: Akçağ Press, 2016.

** See detailed information on the subject: Âşık, Nevzat. “Yesevî'nin Hikmetlerine Kaynaklık Eden Hadislerin Değerlendirilmesi ve Sünnet Kültürünün Hikmetlere Tesiri”, *Ahmed-i Yesevî*. prepared by: Mehmed Şeker, Necdet Yılmaz). İstanbul: Seha Publication, 1996, Yıldırım, Ahmet. *Hoca Ahmed Yesevî'nin Hadis Kültürü*. İstanbul: TDV Press, 2012.

false fatwa will go to hell (ones making white black), hell fears from the ignorant, oleander, torment, snakes, centipedes, etc.

Hikmet (Wisdom) being the subject of our study other than these elements differs from others in terms of being devoted to paradise and hell from start to end and despite being in the front lines with content of paradise and hell, the poet being in position of interlocutor here save the first and last line. Speakers/interlocutors are paradise and hell.

A similar one of Ahmet Yesevi's this paradise and hell colloquy he has written in debate style is in the hadith and hell to talk in verse 30th of Kaf (QAF) Surah in question:

‘Hadarath Ebu Hureyre narrates: Prophet of Allah prescribed that: Paradise and hell sued each other (fell into conflict before Allah). Hell bragged saying:

‘I was preferred for the arrogant (ones patronizing in the world) and the tyrant (ones making bullying).’ And the paradise said:

‘[Ya Allahi] Why only weak and (before people) low ones (ones being despised) enter me?’

Allah Hazrat firstly appealed to paradise: ‘You are my mercy. I shall extend my mercy to my slaves with you!’ Then he addressed to hell:

‘And you are my punishment. I shall punish anyone of my slaves with you!’ (Turning to both of them) He prescribed:

‘Both of you (have mission as well! Both of you) will get filled!’ But, the hell did not get filled at all. Also Allah Hazrat stepped on it. Then the hell moaned saying:

‘Sufficient! Sufficient!’ In this way, both mouths of hell get together. Allah never tyrannizes anybody from His creatures.

As for the paradise, creating new creatures, Allah shall fill it.’³

‘On the day we will say to hell, ‘Have you been filled?’ and it will say, ‘Are there some more.’^{4***}

In the Hikmet inspired from above mentioned verses and hadiths, the paradise where the worshipers live in welfare after death and the hell where the disbelievers and sinners will suffer torment will struggle to overtop from each other by making referral according to either names of humans who deserved themselves or moving from their overall characteristics. By including the equivalents of all actions/situations entailing penalty and award addressed to in the following couplets in the verses and hadiths, the bases of colloquy of paradise and hell in colloquy/debate have been put forth.

In the first two couplets of said Hikmet**** consisting of 25 couplets, the hell brags with Pharaoh and Haman and the paradise with Joseph of Canaan (Hadarath Yusuf).

Hell and Paradise argue, there is a declaration in the argument,

Hell says, “I am superior for I host the Pharaoh Haman”

Paradise says, What are you saying? You do not know what you say

If you have the Pharaoh, I host Joseph of Canaan.”

In the Holy Quran, despite Pharaoh being the title of Egyptian rulers and the name of Joseph of Canaan have not been used together and the names of “ruler” and “lord” have not been included for the king of period, the names of Egyptian King Pharaoh, his vizier Haman and Moses (Hadarath Musa) have been mentioned together.

*** The meanings of verses contained in our study have been taken from <http://www.quran.com> Jun 10, 2016.

**** Said Hikmet has been taken from the following reference: Ahmed Yesevi. <http://www.ayu.edu.tr/yayinlar/yesevi.pdf>. May 29, 2016.

The end of Pharaoh who have persecuted his people, boasted, asserted divinity against Hadarath Moses, deemed Hadarath Moses's miracles as magic, the towers built "to reach at the God of Moses"***** with an order he has given to his Vizier Haman who supports him and Haman has been notified with the following verse:

And [we destroyed] Qarun and Pharaoh and Haman. And Moses had already come to them with clear evidences, and they were arrogant in the land, but they were not outrunners [of our punishment]."⁵

"And we did certainly send Moses with our signs and a clear authority To Pharaoh and his establishment, but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not [at all] discerning. He will precede his people on the day of resurrection and lead them into the fire; and wretched is the place to which they are led. And they were followed in this [world] with a curse and on the day of resurrection. And wretched is the gift which is given."⁶

The paradise that puts forth Hadarath Joseph in response to the hell that considers itself superior with Pharaoh and Haman is due to the fact that monotheism was dominant in the world of Egypt in his tenure prior to Islam. Or another cause for the paradise to put Hadarath Joseph forth against Pharaoh and Haman is that both were at the same position in the struggle of right-superstition in Egypt.

In third and fourth couplets, the hell boasts with the misers having fire chain clamp on their necks and paradise with Kawthar, virgins and great angle.

Hell says, "I am superior for I host the stingy servants;

The stingy have burning collars of iron chains around their necks"

Paradise says, "I am superior for I host the prophets

Before the prophets is the fountain of Kawthar, male and female servants."

The fact that the misers (those who refrain from willful charity of their existing or to be acquired wealth without expecting return) shall be punished with what they do not and will not be able to enter the paradise is specified in the verses and hadiths with following statements:

"And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of his bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the day of resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah , with what you do, is [fully] acquainted."⁷

"In a story quoted from Haris to Ebu Davud, the Messenger of Allah has said as follows: Neither rich miser nor the rude and merciful enters the paradise."⁸

Some of the verses informing that those who join the call and invitation of the prophet being the person who notifies the orders and provisions of Allah and invite the human being to the path of Allah are sure about fear and the companions of paradise are as follows:

"And we will have removed whatever is within their breasts of resentment, [while] flowing beneath them are rivers. And they will say, 'Praise to Allah, who has guided us to this; and we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us. Certainly the messengers of our Lord had come with

***** "And Pharaoh said, 'O Haman, construct for me a tower that I might reach the ways - The ways into the heavens - so that I may look at the deity of Moses; but indeed, I think he is a liar.' And thus was made attractive to Pharaoh the evil of his deed, and he was averted from the [right] way. And the plan of Pharaoh was not except in ruin." *Mu'minun (the Believers):* 36-37. "And Pharaoh said, 'O eminent ones, I have not known you to have a god other than me. Then ignite for me, O Haman, [a fire] upon the clay and make for me a tower that I may look at the God of Moses. And indeed, I do think he is among the liars." *Quran. Kasas (the Stories):* 38.

the truth.' And they will be called, 'This is paradise, which you have been made to inherit for what you used to do.'⁹

"And We send not the messengers except as bringers of good tidings and warners. So whoever believes and reforms there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."¹⁰

In fifth and sixth couplets, the hell boats with the Christians and Jews exposed to various burning torments and the paradise with the believers having blessings in front of them.

Hell says, "I am superior for I host the Christians, the Jews;
Before the Christians and Jews await various types of burning torments."
Paradise says, "I am superior for I host the believing servants
Before the believers await manifold blessings."

Some verses and hadiths regarding that the Christians and Jews will be frustrated, suffer punishment and be the companions of hell hereafter unless they reverted to Islam by following its essentials are as follows:

"Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the last day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled. The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah'; and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of Allah .' That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved [before them]. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded? They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is he above whatever they associate with him."¹¹

"And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the hereafter, will be among the losers. How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their belief and had witnessed that the Messenger is true and clear signs had come to them? And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. Those - their recompense will be that upon them is the curse of Allah and the angels and the people, all together, abiding eternally therein. The punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved. Except for those who repent after that and correct themselves. For indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful. Indeed, those who reject the message after their belief and then increase in disbelief - never will their [claimed] repentance be accepted, and they are the ones astray. Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - never would the [whole] capacity of the earth in gold be accepted from one of them if he would [seek to] ransom himself with it. For those there will be a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers."¹²

"Ebu Hureyre narrates: Hadarath Prophet prescribed that: I swear the person holding soul of Mohammad with his mighty hand that from this ummah, if anybody who - either Jewish or Christian - heard me then would die prior to having believed in what were sent to me shall be explicitly companion of the hell."¹³

Some of the verses regarding that the believers (Islam, Moslem, believed in, having believed in the essential principles of Islam religion) will be awarded with various blessings in the paradise are the following:

"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Beneath them rivers will flow in the Gardens of Pleasure"¹⁴

“But whoever comes to him as a believer having done righteous deeds - for those will be the highest degrees [in position]: Gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. And that is the reward of one who purifies himself.”¹⁵

“On the day you see the believing men and believing women, their light proceeding before them and on their right, [it will be said], ‘Your good tidings today are [of] gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide eternally.’ That is what is the great attainment.”¹⁶

“[To whom Allah will say], ‘O My servants, no fear will there be concerning you this day, nor will you grieve, [you] who believed in our verses and were Muslims. Enter paradise, you and your kinds, delighted.’ Circulated among them will be plates and vessels of gold. And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes, and you will abide therein eternally. And that is paradise which you are made to inherit for what you used to do.”¹⁷

“If anybody who bears witness that there is no Allah but Allah and Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah, Allah shall make the hell illicit for her/him.”¹⁸

In seventh and eighth couplets, the hell boasts with the cruel who were given poison, oleander and the paradise with the scholars enjoying verses and hadiths in their hearts.

Hell says, “I am superior for I host the oppressor servants;

For the oppressors are many types of poisons and unpleasant foods.”

Paradise says, “I am superior for I host the scholarly servants.

In the hearts of scholar are the verses, hadiths, and the Qur’an.”

It has been clearly declared in Holy Quran that those who deny the verses of Allah and suggest polytheism against Him, boast with the power in their hands by getting away from justice are cruel and shall be badly punished:

“And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah or says, ‘It has been inspired to me,’ while nothing has been inspired to him, and one who says, ‘I will reveal [something] like what Allah revealed.’ And if you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the overwhelming pangs of death while the angels extend their hands, [saying], ‘Discharge your souls! Today you will be awarded the punishment of [extreme] humiliation for what you used to say against Allah other than the truth and [that] you were, toward his verses, being arrogant.”¹⁹

“[We revealed it] lest you say, ‘The Scripture was only sent down to two groups before us, but we were of their study unaware,’ or lest you say, ‘If only the Scripture had been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than they.’ So there has [now] come to you a clear evidence from your Lord and a guidance and mercy. Then who is more unjust than one who denies the verses of Allah and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from our verses with the worst of punishment for their having turned away.”²⁰

“And say, ‘The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve.’ Indeed, we have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces. Wretched is the drink, and evil is the resting place.”²¹

The features of oleander tree found in the hell and to whom it shall be presented have been clarified as follow:

“Is paradise a better accommodation or the tree of zaqqum? Indeed, We have made it a torment for the wrongdoers. Indeed, it is a tree issuing from the bottom of the hellfire, Its emerging fruit as if it

was heads of the devils. And indeed, they will eat from it and fill with it their bellies. Then indeed, they will have after it a mixture of scalding water.”²²

“Indeed, the tree of zaqqum is food for the sinful. Like murky oil, it boils within bellies”²³

“Ibni Abbas narrates: The Messenger of Allah prescribed that:

‘If only one drop of oleander would be dropped to the world, this world would subvert the foods of companions of this world. So, how the state of hell’s dweller whose food and drink is oleander would become (understand)!’²⁴

It has been notified both by verses and hadith that the the scholars, the companions of paradise (those who act with Allah - bestowed science, and live and get due science lived and do not deviate from the truth, always and everywhere) act with Quran:

“Rather, the Qur'an is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge. And none reject Our verses except the wrongdoers.”²⁵

“It is he who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.’ And no one will be reminded except those of understanding.”²⁶

“And those who have been given knowledge see that what is revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, and it guides to the path of the exalted in might, the praiseworthy.”²⁷

“Ebu'd-Derda narrates: I have heard that the Messenger of Allah said as follows: Whoever enters the path of followers to learn a science, it means that Allah has included him in the one path going to paradise. Angels lower their wings o (them) being pleased with the aspirant of science. Those in the paradises and in the earth and even the fish in the sea pray to Allah for forgiveness for the scholar. The superiority of scholar over slaves looks like the superiority of moon over the stars in a lunar night. Scholars are the heirs of the prophets. Prophets bequeath neither lira nor qurush heritage, but they leave science heritage. And whoever acquires science becomes having acquired an abundant share.”²⁸

Hell in ninth and tenth verses boats with the hypocrites having fire – collar clamps and the paradise with the slaves having dhikr and idea of Allah in their hearts.

Hell says, “I am superior for I host the hypocrites.

The hypocrites have collars of burning chains around their necks.”

Paradise says, “I am superior for I host the remembering servants.

In the hearts of the remembering servants are the chants of the Truth of the Almighty.”

Some of the verses regarding that the hypocrites (seem to be believer even though they do not believe in and being hypocrite or being in hesitation due to bodily/mentally causes) deserve the hell are as follows:

“Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper-“²⁹

“Allah has promised the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers the fire of hell, wherein they will abide eternally. It is sufficient for them. And Allah has cursed them, and for them is an enduring punishment.”³⁰

“And [that] he may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women - those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them hell, and evil it is as a destination.”³¹

There are many verses in the Holy Koran to mention the name of Allah. Those who have zikr and idea in their hearts will have salvation also specified in the verses:

“And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to him with [complete] devotion.”³²

“And mention the name of your Lord [in prayer] morning and evening”³³

“O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance”³⁴

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the last day and [who] remembers Allah often.”³⁵

“And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.”³⁶

“And remember your Lord within yourself in humility and in fear without being apparent in speech - in the mornings and the evenings. And do not be among the heedless.”³⁷

In eleventh and twelfth couplets, the hell boasts with the non-prayers having snakes and centipedes on their necks and the paradise with those who would go there would see Allah.

Hell says, “I am superior for I host those who do not perform their prayers
Around their necks are snakes and centipedes.”

Paradise says, “I am superior for seeing the beauty of God in me
To show His beauty, there is the Beneficent, the Merciful.”

Some of the verses regarding that the prayers would have salvation and non-prayers would be punished are as follows:

“As guidance and good tidings for the believers Who establish prayer and give zakah, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith].”³⁸

“He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself and mentions the name of his Lord and prays.”³⁹

“Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”⁴⁰

“But those who hold fast to the Book and establish prayer - indeed, We will not allow to be lost the reward of the reformers.”⁴¹

“Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained except the companions of the right, [who will be] in gardens, questioning each other about the criminals, [and asking them], ‘What put you into Saqar?’ They will say, ‘We were not of those who prayed, nor did we used to feed the poor. And we used to enter into vain discourse with those who engaged [in it], and we used to deny the day of recompense until there came to us the certainty.’ So there will not benefit them the intercession of [any] intercessors.”⁴²

In the verses and hadiths related to the beauty of Allah to be seen, it is said as follows:

“[Some] faces, that day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord.”⁴³

“Hadarath Süheyb narrates: The Messenger of Allah he prescribed that: ‘Once the paradise companions entered the paradise, Allah His Holiness:

Prescribed ‘If you want another thing, tell me, I shall further give it as well!’ The paradise companions said:

‘Didn’t you whiten our faces? Didn’t you put us into paradise? Didn’t you rescue us from the hell (what else we would ask for?)’. Then the curtain is opened. Nothing else more lovable than looking at their Almighty Allah has been ever granted to them.

“Süheyb says that: Followed by these words of him, the Messenger of Allah has recited the following verse. (in purporting): There is better favor and a plus to those who have done a good job and deeds, Yunus (Jonah): 26.”

“Cerir İbni Abdullah narrates: The Messenger of Allah at a lunar night, looked at the moon and said: ‘As you see that moon, you will also see your Allah without a curtain and not fallen into constriction in seeing Him (all will see comfortably). Now, do this, if you are strong enough for not being prevailed regarding any prayers prior to sunrise and sunset (perform the prayers in time and do not let its time to elapse).’”⁴⁴

In last couplet where the paradise and hell colloquy has ended, the poet holds the floor and expresses that the fact that the hell has apologized from paradise accepting its superiority was notified by Allah.

Hell stopped there and apologized to Paradise,

What the slave Khoja knows is that there is Allah Who lets him know.”

CONCLUSION

The result to arise from the entirety of paradise and hell colloquy is being stated at 20th verse of doom day (hashr) as follows: “Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of paradise. The companions of paradise - they are the attainers [of success].”⁴⁵

Enjoying the objective of teaching the provisions and orders of Islam in light of Holy Quran and hadiths and get Islam loved by the indigenous and nomadic peoples, Ahmet Yesevi has penned the work in a way matching with its objective and in didactic – style language which would be comprehended by the mass being addressed to.

In the poem we have analyzed contained in *Divan-ı Hikmet* and consisted of intellectually religious mystic and national elements in terms of shape,⁴⁶ hell boasts with Pharaoh, Haman, those who are scrooge, Christian, Jewish, cruel, hypocrite and non-prayer and the paradise with Hadarath Joseph, prophets, believers, scholars, chanting slaves and a place where the beauty of Allah to be seen. Moving from the verses and hadiths, the poet has made the paradise and the hell talk, being two opposing concepts in a poetic style and demonstrated the superiority of paradise to hell in pursuit of the same source.

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