

## Mir Findiriski, a Peripatetic or Illuminationist Philosopher?

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### Abstract

*All historians and researchers of Islamic Philosophy think of 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> Century (in Safavid Era) as a period of blossoming of Iranian-Shi'i philosophy and the emergence of figures such as Mir Damad, Shaykh Bahai, Mulla Sadra, and Mir Findiriski. Among them, Abul-Qasim Mir Findiriski has been less than other introduced; and scientific and practical aspects of his life have not been discussed in details. More important is his school of taste which, if we take into account his various spiritual and intellectual dimensions as well as his Sufi life style, cannot be classified under philosophical, intuitionist, and mystical schools then popular in the history of Islamic philosophy.*

*On the one hand, he was teaching books such as Ibn Sina's Shifa and Qanun, and on the other, he was so interested in pious life of Dervishes and even life style of Indian Yugis. In addition, poems left by him under the title "Ya'iyah Odes" (odes ending in the vowel /i/), suggest mainly his mystical and Illuminationist-Platonist and Neo-Platonist-inclinations. And these poems have caused various and even conflicting stories to be presented about his views and school of thought. Thus, it seems to be difficult and even impossible to specify his intellectual orientation and practical style. One of the analyses made in this regard is that Mir's thought and approach is described as eclectic, and he is regarded as the meeting point of different – and even conflicting – theoretical and practical attitudes. While neglecting the "Ya'iyah Odes" and*

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*the relevant commentaries, the author of this article has tried to describe and analyze Mir's intellectual attitudes and possibly his philosophical system based on three works of him.*

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### Intellectual Origins and Education

Abul-Qasim was born in a village called Findirisk, and studied preliminaries in that region. Later, however, he went to Isfahan to continue his studies. He studied philosophy and sciences under Alammah Chalbi Bayg Tabrizi who was, in turn, a disciple of "Afadal al-Din Muhammad Turkah Isfahani". There, later, he began to teach; intellectual and scientific environment of those times was, however, apparently in conflict with his freedom-seeking and restraint-avoiding spirit. Like his master, Chalbi Bayg Tabrizi and many others from among people of science, literature, mysticism, and arts, he went to India (*Great Islamic Encyclopedia* (CGIE), vol. 6, p. 169). After his first travel to India, Mir went to Isfahan to attend classes of great masters, among whom only one has been mentioned by name: "At the beginning he was a disciple of "Allamah Chalbi Bayg Tabrizi", and then he studied under Ishraq [by Ishraq, Mir Damad is meant under whom Mir Findiriski studied *Shifa*], and acquired a taste for sciences altogether, and then he went repeatedly to India" (*Kheradname Sadra*, no. 11, p. 86, *The Caravan of India*, p. 15). Generally speaking, we know little of his childhood and preliminary studies; and in biographies, there is no mention save to his ancestors. Thus, our knowledge about him is confined to the times when he went to Isfahan and India – i.e. middle period of his life. Based on the existing sources, it seems that Mir had gone to India for the first time before his settlement in Isfahan. In this regard, it is written:

At the beginning of his studies, he went to India and, when he returned, he stayed in the Kingship City, Isfahan, and allowed scholars and philosophers to enjoy his own knowledge. In the various kinds of philosophy such as natural, Divine, medicine, mathematics, and the like, he became the first one among his peers; and his teachings were based on discussions about *Shifa* and *Qanun*. (*Tarikh-i 'Alamara-yi 'Abbasi*, p. 75)

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Most sources do not provide us with a description of Mir's studies on Peripateticism and stages in which his thought had been formed; in the same way that details of his travels which were made, to be sure, to study and attend in classes of masters and people of knowledge and wayfaring, are unknown. Evidence shows that, in addition to Isfahan, Mir had traveled to Iraq and India as well; but, in biographies, there is no distinction made between Mir's times in India and Iran – and possibly Iraq:

He grew up in Findiriski; and after his childhood, he studied in Iran and Iraq; then he went to India to study sciences of that country as well and get familiar with Indian scholars (*Rahnama-yi pazhubesh dar baray-i Mir Findiriski*, (Guide to Research on Mir Findiriski), p. 12). Some sources, however, say that after his preliminary studies, Mir went directly to the city of knowledge, Isfahan. There he studied for a long while (*Shi'i Great Scholars, from Kulayni to Khomayni*, p. 132). Now, it may be said that either Mir did not went to Iraq or stayed there for a very short while. He was so interested and enthusiast to acquire rational and transmitted sciences that some people have said that he learnt all sciences of his time from various scholars; and in this, he was confirmed by scholars such as "Aqa Husayn Khwansari" and "Muhammad Baqir Sabzawari"<sup>1</sup>. In all sciences of his time such as Divine, natural, and mathematical ones, he came to be the most perfect one; but he is said to be weak in religious transmitted sciences (*A'yan al-shi'ah*, vol. 7, p. 68, and *Riyad al-'ulama*, p. 499). His command on philosophical principles and in particular on Peripatetic philosophy may be seen in reputation of his classes which has been mentioned in many sources (*Akhtaran-i tabnak* (Birght Stars), p. 43). It seems, however, that the study of theoretical sciences had not satisfied his curios and truth-seeking spirit; and in his quest for the spiritual world and esoteric wayfaring, he was seeking for a guide beyond country's borders. Mir Findiriski did not cease to wayfare to find truth; and wherever he went and found a great scholar, he attended in his classes to satisfy his own thirst from the spring of his knowledge and insight. Finally, he entered classes of "Adhar Kayvan"<sup>2</sup>; and influenced by this Arian figure; he accessed new sciences and ideas; and new windows of knowledge were opened to him. Because of Adhar Kayvan's companionship, Mir Findiriski got familiar with Zoroastrian, Hindu, and Buddhist ideas; and in him there emerged Sufist and Mystical ideas as well as interest in solitude, avoidance from hurting animals, and companionship with the poor and nomadic (*Jashnamah-yi Muhammad Parwin Gunabadi*, p. 344). Though, the main theme of this story cannot be

doubted, as we will see, there are many questions and ambiguities about the extent of interaction between the two (Mir and Adhar Kayvan) and in particular concerning Sufist tradition and its various branches then existing in India. Thus, it is not so justified to make such assertions about Mir's Mystical attitude. What is known is that in his staying in India, Mir Findiriski got familiar with and become interested in Hindu ideas in philosophy and mysticism. This caused him to gather a selection of the translation of *Yoga Vaisishha* or *Jog Basishth* and write glosses on it. He seems to be, because of staying in India, influenced by some of their ideas. Having quoted from *Dabistan-i al-madhabib* (School of Manners), many biographers have said that in this he had been influenced by one of the disciples of Adhar Kayvan; but, this statement of the author of *Dabistan-i al-madhabib* cannot be true (*Justari dar ara wa afkar-i Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski*, p. 443).

If we are to find characteristics of Mir's mystical wayfaring, we have to say that sources are silent about Mir's mystical ideas and probably his wayfaring and practical mood; and they have mentioned only his attempts to purify his soul:

He was very serious in asceticism; more often, he went to India to perfect his studies in mathematics, enjoy their esoteric sciences and Yogi states; he went among Indian Yogis to understand their characteristics perfectly. In the world of mysticism and school of pious people, he attained higher positions (*Sharh-i hal-i Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski*, p. 57). Mir's companionship with Indian Yogis and masters of Sufi schools have been mentioned in most sources; but in the claim that Mir had believed in Yogis school one should doubt; his command on Pahlavi and Sanskrit, of course, is undoubtful, for he proceeded to describe and adopt an important Sanskrit text to which we return later.

Mir Findiriski was unique in heresiography (*milal wa nihal*). In addition to Arabic and Persian, he was fluent in Pahlavi and Sanskrit; and this was so interesting in that time, for usually people of knowledge did not learn such languages. It has been said that Mir Findiriski learnt Pahlavi and Sanskrit in India, not in Iran (Ibid, p. 58). And this is an indication of Mir's interest to know the then unknown things.

At the same time, all sources are unanimous that Mir was fluent in some main branches of knowledge. To describe Mir's scientific position, it has been said:

In no age, there has been any one equal to him in particular in Divine philosophy (*Tadhkirah-yi riyad al-'Arifin*, p. 166). He taught Ibn Sina's *Qanun* and *Shifa*, and great scholars attended his classes (*Thufah- al-murad*,

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p. 4; *Akhtaran-i tabnak*, p. 43). And most teachers of *Shifa* and *al-Isharat* in Isfahan were disciples of his disciples (*Justari dar ara wa afkar-i Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski*, p. 43 and p. 57). He was well-known for his fluency in solving mathematical problems (*Rijal-i isfahan*, p. 289). He was famous because of his knowledge of philosophy, geometry and other branches of mathematics (*Falasafah-yi shi'ah*, p. 111, *Rayhanah al-adab*, vol. 4, p. 357). In addition, his fluency in jurisprudence and theology (*kalam*) should not be neglected; in this regard, his discussions with his own disciples and other people of knowledge are well-known. Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani thinks of Mir as one of the great figures of philosophy, geometry, mathematics, and mysticism in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. His fluency in various sciences as well as his knowledge of different schools preceded his research aspects (*al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani's Introduction, p. 84; *Falasafah-yi irani az aghaz ta immruz*, p. 523). At the same time, he was so avoiding from showing his knowledge that his disciple, Muhaqqiq Khwansari, says:

He has many things to say about rational sciences; and if he brings his words to conclusion, he will become more known for his knowledge; and for the same reason, before coming to a conclusion, he cease to speak deliberately. (*Sayri dar ahwal wa athar-i Mir Findiriski*, p. 328)

From his *Risala-yi sinayyiah* (Treatise on Arts)<sup>3</sup>, it may be seen that Mir was familiar with mathematics and music, and read Farabi's *al-Musiqi al-kabir*. (Based on a collection now we know), even he taught music. Abu 'Isa Muhammad, the son of Muhammad Salih Nishapuri, studied music under Mir; and in this field, Mir taught him some books (*Mir Findiriski*, p. 58, and p. 71). Thus, based on these reports, we may conclude that he was fluent in most sciences of his time. At the same time, we should not neglect that Mir was mainly well-known for his Peripatetic position; and for this reason, his fluency in other sciences should be seen as a fruit of his philosophical knowledge.

Anyway, though unlike Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Suhrawardi, Mir did not found a philosophical school, and had probably no innovation in the field of argumentation and rational and demonstrative methods, it seems that he played a great role to hand down philosophical heritage, teach students, and protect and publicize rational thinking (*Ayinah Pazhubesh Quarterly*, no 4, p. 28). And thus, he should be regarded at least as one of the most important links between Islamic philosophical tradition and the present time.

## Intellectual Attitude and Practical Life

To present a vivid picture of Mir's philosophical and intellectual system, we have no way other than referring to his works and writings; for, his multi-dimensional life was full of travels and various - and even conflicting - stories and interests, and could not help us in this regard. But there are certain limitations and shortages concerning his works as well. For example, only a few of them have been handed down to us; and those works which are now available are mostly short essays, which are not probably able to show the totality of his thought. In this section, based on Mir's three famous works, *Risala-yi sinayyiah*, *Risala-yi harakah* (Treatise on Motion), and *Jog Basishtb*, while neglecting his *Ya'iyah Odes* which requires an independent article to be discussed, we will mention some elements of his views. To be sure, to provide a vivid picture of Mir's thoughts, one has to contemplate on his works and writings, and study his principles and conclusions for a longer while.

### *Risala-yi sinayyiah*

Mir's most important work is his *Risala-yi sinayyiah*; for despite the fact that it is a short treatise and the author has discussed briefly, it contains Mir's main ideas and views as well as some ideas which may indicate the general characteristics of his intellectual school.

This work was once published on 1267 AH Lunar as *Haqayiq al-sanayi'* (Truths of Arts) in Bombay (together with Khwajah Nasir's *Nasrean Ethics*). It concerns mainly sciences, arts, and the reason that why they are useful or detrimental. In addition to the above edition, in the first volume of *Selections from Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers*, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani has included a selection of *Risala-yi sinayyiah* and *Risala-yi harakah* together with instructive explanations and points; and this edition has been used by the author of the present article. In this treatise, he understood *sina'ah* (arts) as whatever thing which may result from man's rational and practical faculties. In 24 chapters and one conclusion, he has gone to describe definition of arts; their types; relation between various arts; usage and end of each of them; their usefulness, extent of their honor and dishonor, contributions made by people of arts in the society; and then he has ordered arts in terms of their nobility and ends up to an art which is the end of all ends (*Great Islamic Encyclopedia* (CGIE), vol. 6, p. 171). He divided arts in some kinds: some of them are necessary and useful; some are useful but unnecessary; and some are by

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essence good while some still others are by accident good.

Diversity of Mir's views toward arts and kinds of arts was of paramount importance and unprecedented in his own time. It is very striking that, in 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> Century, Mir Findiriski has divided arts as described in *Risala-yi sanayyiah*; for centuries ago, a book had been written in which a different idea of art was provided (*Tarikh-I ijtimayi-yi iran* (Iran Social History), vol. 5, p. 692). One may say that, based on separation made by Mir between more useful and less useful arts and his emphasis on necessity of improvement in people's livelihood, he is actually presenting an economic theory - though in brief - which has inspired later scholars. In his well-known treatise, *Libas al-taqwa*, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi took into account two important books: *Haqayiq al-sanayi'* (*Risala-yi sanayyiah*) and Khwajah Nasir's *Nasrean Ethics* (Ibid., vol. 5, p. 719).

*Risala-yi sanayyiah* includes various issues and points, each of which may be discussed and extended on its own right. Based on the content of this treatise, now we are in a position to mention some Mir's views and ideas in theoretical and practical philosophy, and outline his views as follows:

### 1. On Admiration of Useful Persons and Arts and Condemnation of Useless Persons and Arts

Mir thinks that, since human beings in the society are like limbs of a body, useless persons should be separated from the body of society, and even be punished. Among them are qalandars and slothful ones some of them should be educated and some other ones are entitled to be punished. From this perspective, he goes to justify reward and punishment in law and *shari'a*, and regards sinful man as one gone out of Divine Reason order, who should be returned back to the divine order through punishment by God (*Selections from Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers*, vol. 1, pp. 64-5). Then he speaks about the necessity of attempts of all individuals of the society, criticizes superstitions such as belief in chance and accidents, and emphasizes that one has to work and create permanently (Ibid, p. 65). He puts much emphasis on the principle of work, production, and creation of wealth in society, and criticizes the style life of some Sufis and Indian Brahmans who recommend leaving the worldly matters (to pay attention to the other-world); he thinks that man and society have to prepare provisions. He thinks that attempts made for worldly matters and livelihood are so necessary that devoted the ninth section of *Risala-yi sanayyiah* to music

and explanation of the necessity of understanding theoretical music (*Tarikh-I ijtimayi-yi iran* (Iran Social History), p. 690).

## **2. On Similarity between Faculties of the Soul on the One Hand and Levels of Existence and Parts of the Society on the Other**

In this treatise, while putting forward the important point that "man is microcosm and the universe is macrocosm" (*Selections from Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers*, vol. 1, pp. 63), Mir compares man's faculties of the soul and his limbs (microcosm) as well as duties of each one of them with levels of existence (macrocosm); and on other hand, he compares each one of them with various classes of the society, and her individuals and members; and then he describes the role played by each one of them in the society (*Ibid*). In these cases, Mir seems to describe levels of man and the universe with terminology of philosophers and mystics, and make a synthesis of them.

## **3. On Levels of Prophets (a) and Philosophers, and Mistakes and Sins which May Be Committed by Them**

In another part of *Risala-yi sanyyiah*, Mir analyzes origins and causes of mistakes and sins according to the friends of God, philosophers, and scholars. He thinks that philosophers may commit mistakes in theory and practice; but prophets may not; and describes the reason behind this as follows:

In theory and practice, philosophers commit mistakes occasionally. And prophets do not commit mistakes in theory and practice; and philosophers find knowledge through thinking and acting; and prophets through revelation and inspiration; and what is theoretically known for philosophers is evident for them; ... and there is no mistakes admitted in evident matters... and the rational faculty is infinite in prophets. (*Ibid.*, pp. 73-4)

The conclusion is that knowledge and truths are, for prophets, the same as the presence of the forms of first principles and immediate perceptions, and clearly that there is no doubt and forgetfulness admitted in such things, and the reason behind this is that prophets acquire knowledge immediately and through emanation of Lordly lights; but, knowledge of philosophers is acquired through contemplation,



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demonstration, major, minor, and middle terms and the like. Then, for prophets, there is no veil between the intelligent and intelligible; while for philosophers, there is no union between the intelligent and intelligible, and to find the intelligible, they have to appeal to theories and arguments (Ibid, p. 75). By an attractive commentary on the last verses of *Fatihah al-kitab*, he brings his discussion to a conclusion, and says that those who have selected the middle point between esoteric and exoteric meanings are going along the right path; they have both gone toward virtuality and understood the truth; he thinks that any deviation from such moderation makes the one entitled to go to Hell. Thus, he calls people of esotericism "those who earn God's anger" and people of exotericism "those who go astray". And based on the context, he prefers people of exotericism to people of esotericism altogether (*The Collection of Papers of International Congress on Cordoba and Isfahan*, p. 333). From what is said about Mir's states and moods, one should not infer that he has confirmed the way of Sufis and Qalandars, and promoted their school; in the same way he denounces the way of the people of exotericism and dogmatic leaders of *shari'ah*. In this regard, he writes in *Risala-yi sanayyiah*:

And the mistake committed by people's of esotericism and exotericism is that the former heard of Imams that there is a meaning beyond appearance for Quranic words and prophetic hadiths that only special people are able to understand; and by this, they understood what is contained in the theoretical sciences, as we said. And they interpreted practical commands in an esoteric way as well, and refused *shari'ah*. And the people of exotericism thought that prophets' words should be, in theory and practice, understood in the same way that they appear, and there is no interpretation admitted in the Holy Quran, and described God as Creature. They are better than the former group, that the ambiguous words in the holy Quran are to make them understood, unless they make malice because of their rational power. (*Selections from Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers*, pp. 76-7)

Thus, according to Mir, neither the followers of esotericism and Qalandars nor people of exotericism are right; but rather in right path are those who have selected to go in the middle path, and observe the appearance of *shari'ah* and worships and at the same time accept what is stated by reason and its consequences:

And there is the moderate group who have gone in the middle way between esotericism and exotericism which is the same as right path; and they understood prophets' words about rational matters in accord to the reason, and interpreted in the same way that prophets intended; concerning transmitted matters and acts, they made their own reasons subordinate to the prophets'. And God- the Glory, the Exalted- has mentioned them in the beginning of His Book. (Ibid, p. 77)

As seen, Mir Findiriski denounces both the group who have left *shari'a* and inclined to Sufism and that group who have sufficed to the appearance of religion; and thinks that the right path is in an agreement between exterior and interior; and thus, that Mir is described as a Qalandar, as did by some Orientalists such as Edward Brown (See, *History of Persian Literature*, vol. 4, p. 360), is not correct.

#### **4. Mir's Comparisons and Interpretations According to Terminology of Various Schools**

In this regard, one may mention correspondence between Zoroastrian Ahriman with pure nonexistence and "potential faculty" (or potentiality versus actuality, and hyle versus form) which is, according to researchers, other than terminology of Illuminationists who call hyle (or the last thing in the descending hierarchy) "*tilismat*" or "*jawhar-i ghasiq*" (dark substance) (*Life, Personality, and School of Mulla Sadra*, p. 226).

This may indicate Mir's particular Peripatetic inclinations as well as his demonstrative principles; and, as we will see, for various reasons Mir cannot be called an Illuminationist.

#### ***Risala-yi harakah***

This treatise consists of five chapters concerning mechanism of motion, mover, and relation between them. From among the most important issues discussed in this treatise is Mir's view about forms and essences of things according to Plato's theory concerning "ideas". Now, it should be found that whether there are points in Mir's philosophical "system" suggesting his inclination to Platonic thought.

About Mir's view concerning Platonic "Ideas", some scholars think that he believed in ideal forms (something like Platonic system); and to prove this, they refer to first lines of his *Ya'iyah Odes* where he says:

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"With these stars, heaven is beautiful, good, and marvelous  
"Has a form beneath whatever thing which is above  
"The form beneath, if with the ladder of knowledge  
"Goes upward, is the same as its own origin"

In particular, they emphasize Mir's irony about Peripatetic philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn Sina

"This no exoteric one can understand  
"Even if he is Abu Nasr or Bu Ali Sina".  
(Mutahhari, *Collection of Works*, vol. 5, p. 145, *Niyayish-i filsuf*)

Some commentators of *Ya'iyah Odes* such as "Hakim Abbas Sharif Darabi" and "Hakim Muhsin Gilani" has inferred, from the first three lines of this poem, that Mir believed on Platonic ideas, and then they have gone to criticize views of Peripatetic philosophers and opponents of Platonic ideas (*Tuhfat al-murad*, pp. 37-54, p. 255).

A look at Mir's works and in particular his *Risala-yi barakah* shows that, in spite of some Illuminationist inclinations, he has proved "the first mover" according to Peripatetic principles, and criticized and rejected Platonic ideas. At the beginning of this treatise, he says:

Through writing this treatise, I intend to describe motion and its form, and show that each and every moving thing has, somehow, motion. And I seek to say that we need not Platonic Ideas in the world of generation. (*Selections from Works of Iranian Divine Philosophers*, p. 88.)

In the fifth (last) chapter of the treatise, he says:

The fifth chapter concerns needlessness of the things of the natural world to Platonic Ideas. (Ibid, p. 86)

Then he goes to describe his own arguments to reject Ideas. Ashtiyani emphasizes that Mir's rejection of Ideas results from his philosophical methodology which is Peripatetic. Elsewhere, he writes:

In philosophical methodology, Mir follows Ibn Sina; though some biographers regard him as being mystic, and some others call him Illuminationist. But, it should be said that their claim is not based on a correct principle. (*Tuhfat al-murad*, Introduction)

The other commentator of *Ya'iyah Odes*, Hakim Mulla Muhammad Salih Khalkhalu (a disciple of Mirza Jilwah) believes that the terms "beneath" and "above" suggest some things other than what is understood from the theory of Ideas:

By "beneath" used in the second part of the first line, Mir Findiriski means "soul" and by "whatever thing which is above", he intends to mention "body"; and since the soul is hidden, he mentions it as something which is beneath. (Ibid, p. 181, p. 188)

Taking into account what is said, one cannot accept that in these odes Mir Findiriski intended to mention Platonic Ideas; though this possibility cannot be rejected, as compared with Mir's clear expressions in the *Risala-yi harakah*, it is of no value. Perhaps. Like other great figures, commentators of these odes (Darabi and Gilani) had not seen Mir's *Risala-yi harakah*, and this is not so unlikely (*Sayri dar ahwal wa athar-i Mir Findiriski*, p. 171). At the same time, some evidence suggests Mir's Illuminationist inclination cannot be neglected; for example, in the *Risala-yi Sana'iyah* he has accepted the doctrine of "union between intelligent and intelligible", and mentioned the important principle of "possibility of the nobler". Those who have a professional knowledge of Islamic philosophy are well aware that the rule of "possibility of the nobler" and the doctrine of "union between intelligent and intelligible" are of no Peripatetic taint, and they are closer to Platonic-Illuminationist school (*Niyayish-i filsuf*, p. 344).

It is true that Mir's works and writings on the one hand and his practical life on the other, and a synthesis made of these two aspects in one and the same personality do not allow us to regard him as a pure Peripatetic or Illuminationist; and as a result, it should be said that his intellectual orientation is a synthesis of various philosophical, mystical, and esoteric traditions; for example, some researchers have mentioned Mir's esoteric teachings (*History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 480).

Now, we discuss Mir's another work which consists of his glosses on an Indian mystical work which was already mentioned:

### *Glosses on Jog Basishth*

At first, it should be noted that the term "yoga" is taken from the verb "yuj" which means "to join", and "yoga" is an equivalent for joinder and

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Yogi is an equivalent for connection. In philosophical terminology, it is of the six schools of Hindu philosophy whose principles are based on asceticism and bodily exercises. The Persian term "Yugh" and the English "yuck" are of this Arian root. The school of yoga supplements the school of Sankhia, and it does not relate to Chinese and Buddhist schools. This school was founded by Patanjaly who lived about the second Century BC. This school accepts Sankhia's philosophical, metaphysical, and psychological principles (*Jashnamah-yi Muhammad Parvin Gonabadi*, p. 356).

As said in the section concerning Mir's works, this book is in fact a summary of a long poem consisting of 23000 lines in Sanskrit composed on the 9<sup>th</sup> Century AD. In Akbar Shah's era, it was translated into Persian by Nizam al-Din Panipati. This work contains a dialogue between "Vazyasht the wise" and "Ramachandra" about philosophical and mystical issues in the form of allegories, stories, and symbolic tales. The main theme of the book is "unity of existence" as viewed in Sankara school. The book consists of six chapters: the first chapter concerns disinterest in worldly matters; the second chapter speaks of the way to break sensual dependencies; the third chapter is about the beginning of appearance of the world; the fourth one concerns the survival of the appearance of the world; the fifth chapter speaks about the annihilation of the appearance of the world; and the sixth chapter relates salvation from repeated births and deaths (*Justari dar ara wa afkar-i Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski*, p. 443).

While staying in India, Mir got familiar with this work, and became interested in it. While studying this book, he added some glosses which help to explain points mentioned in this book. Mir's glosses on this book show that he was very enthusiast to acquire knowledge of Hindu sciences, and did his best to do so. He got some familiarity with Sanskrit; and his remarks on this language and her terms and words show that he had understood that such books should be read in the original language (*Great Islamic Encyclopedia (CGIE)*, vol. 6, p. 172). And from attempts made by him to learn this language, one may infer that he put much emphasis on the necessity of familiarity of Muslim scholars with Hindu philosophical and mystical heritage, and on reading their text in the original language.

His glosses on, and comparative points made about this work is full of subtleties and in particular poems. At the beginning of Persian translation, he quotes some poems in which he describes this work as the most valuable writing after the Holy Quran and hadiths of the Infallibles (a):

"These words are like moving river  
"Pure and knowledge-increasing like the Holy Quran  
"Apart from the Holy Quran and hadiths  
"Nobody has spoken in this way  
"An idiot who heard these words  
"Or saw such subtleties  
"Would not understand save its form  
(*Justari dar ara wa afkar-i Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski*, p. 443)

Everywhere in this work, Mir tries to interpret its contents according to Platonic or Aristotelian principles as is done by philosophers and mystics; and most importantly, he attempts to compare them with principles of Islamic thought.

For example, in many points and sometimes when using Biruni's words, he refers to the verses of the Holy Quran and hadiths of the Infallibles (a); and even he himself tries to interpret and explain Indian terms. In the preface of the book, he writes: "In other words, Brahmans say the same thing said by ancient wise people about Oneness of God; and at first, the author has admired God, and mentioned His manifestations. He has said that God created the world four times, and each time, a manifestation of Him appeared..." (qtd. *Jashnnamah-yi Muhammad Parvin Gonabadi*, p. 354).

Mir prepared a dictionary for *Jog Basishtbi* titled "*Kashf al-lughat-i Jog*" which has been attached in some versions to the main work; and it has been published independently as well. In this dictionary, Indian words are ordered alphabetically whose definitions have been mostly taken from the text. In some cases, he has added some explanations. In 1981, a Persian translation has been edited by Muhammad Reza Jalali Na'yini and published without Mir's glosses. But, various versions of this work is, together with the next addenda, available in Iranian libraries (*Great Islamic Encyclopedia* (CGIE), vol. 6, p. 172).

Anyway, Mir's synthetic and comparative approach in his glosses on this work is of importance from various aspects; particularly, since in Mir's time, such an approach to mystical heritage of the Orient, and that in a comparative way, is an original and unprecedented one.

## Conclusion

Taking into account such considerations, one may understand why

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(میرفندرسکی: فیلسوف مشایی یا اشراقی؟)

such different views have been introduced about Mir Findiriski and his school. Based on the Mir's extant treatises and books, some people have regarded him as a follower of Peripatetic principles and its teachers; and some others, based in some of his works including *Ya'iyah Odes*, think that he had been well-versed in Illuminism and mysticism. It should be noted, however, that many researchers think that Mir's intellectual attitude corresponds with principles of Peripateticism; and in this regard, they mention some Mir's ideas. For example, his view about rejection of essential gradation, prophecy, and the way that theoretical intelligible things are acquired for them, man's perfection up to the level of the first Intellect and the like have been, all and all, regarded as corresponding to Peripateticism and against the taste of mystics and Illuminists (*The Collection of Papers of International Congress on Cordoba and Isfahan*, p. 331). A study of lives and works of Mir's disciple confirms the same; for, in no works of his disciples, whether glosses and interpretations or philosophical writings, an interest in Illuminism is seen (*Ibid*). And thus, it seems not so justified to appeal to his *Ya'iyah Odes* to prove his Illuminist attitude. Some others believe that Mir's works are written neither in Peripatetic usual way nor in an Illuminist way; and he is not a philosopher or theologian in the strict sense of the words, but rather he had been a teacher of the books of philosophers and theologians; and he had been likely well-versed in mathematics and strange sciences<sup>4</sup>.

What is interesting about Mir's scientific and philosophical backgrounds – and those of his predecessors and disciples – is that the tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed a profound and influential attempt made to synthesize Peripatetic and Illuminist traditions to bring them closer to the scope of transmitted sciences and Revelation. The climax and original point of this synthesis should be found in Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy in which the Holy Quran, demonstration, and mysticism have been synthesized. It goes without saying that such inclinations may be seen, before Mulla Sadra, in thoughts of figures such as Mir Damad and Mir Findiriski; for example, though these two philosophers were teaching and writing based on Peripatetic principles, and were well-known as well-versed teachers of Ibn Sina's *Shifa* and *al-Isharat*, no one of them may be regarded as being purely Peripatetic and absolutely following Peripatetic tradition, in the same way that such considerations should be observed when we call Farabi and Ibn Sina "Peripatetic philosophers". Ibn Sina's symbolic treatises and writings as well as some parts of *al-Isharat* which have been

written in a mystical way confirm our claim; Mir Damad had selected as his pseudonym "*Isbraq*" (Illumination). Some researchers think that Shi'ism and its spiritual capacities are apt to acquire such a synthesis, and regard this as the main cause of synthetic attitude of that time.

Thus, Mir Damad or Mir Findiriski cannot be called purely Illuminationist or merely Peripatetic philosopher in the context of Islamic culture and philosophical thought. When Muslim thinkers got familiar with works and ideas of Aristotle and other Peripatetic philosophers, they became familiar with an Aristotle mixed with Neo-Platonic elements and works such as *Athologia* or *Kitab al-'ilal* (The Book of Causes)<sup>5</sup>. That some strains of a new philosophical system, and as called by Ibn Sina "Oriental philosophy", which has later appeared as Suhrawardi's Illuminationism, gave to Islamic philosophy an orientation other than what was present as Peripateticism among followers of Aristotle (*Collection of Papers Presented in the Conference on Fadil Sarab and Isfahan in His Time*, p. 38p).

In this regard, in his introduction to *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*, Sayyid Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani puts forward some points which, because of their importance, we quote them here:

"Ideas of Mir Findiriski's disciples were centered on Ibn Sina's words and Peripateticism. This shows that Mir taught Peripatetic works, i.e. Ibn Sina's books; and his command on and information about various schools are superior to his research aspect. In all points on which Peripateticism and Illuminationism debate, he prefers Peripateticism.

"Texts taught by him were Ibn Sina's books; those who have gone to provide his biography regard him as an Illuminationist philosopher and Sufi scholar.

"Replies provided by Mir Findiriski to Aqa Muzaffar Kashi's questions are verily confirmations of demonstrative philosophy, and show his inclination toward ideas of Ibn Sina, Mir Damad, Khwajah, and the Second Master [Farabi]". (Introduction of *al-Shawahid al-rububiyah*, pp. 86-7)

Thus, synthetic aspect of Mir's thought, which was mentioned at the beginning of this article, should be emphasized; and it should be noted that, in some respects, Mir may be classified as a Peripatetic philosopher; and in some other respects, he should be regarded as being among people of taste, spirituality, and Illuminationism.



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Though similar to origins of Neo-Platonic thought in the history of Western philosophical thought, this tradition cannot be reduced to Neo-Platonism; but rather, because of dissimilarities between them, innovative aspects in Mir's thought should be emphasized more than ever. I hope that in future, these important issues may be discussed and written by researchers and scholars.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>. For details about lives and scientific positions of these two great contemporary philosophers, see books about Islamic philosophy.
- <sup>2</sup>. Iranian Zoroasterian cleric who lived in India; he is the author of *Jam-i Kaykhusraw*
- <sup>3</sup>. One of his works which will be later discussed.
- <sup>4</sup>. Fadil Sarab and Encounter between the School of Mulla rajab 'Ali Tabrizi and the School of Mulla Sadra; *Collection of Papers Presented in the Conference on Fadil Sarab and Isfahan in His Time*, p. 387
- <sup>5</sup>. After Aristotle death (322 BC) until 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD, some works – including the two above ones- which had been written by Neo-Platonist writers and philosophers, were mistakenly ascribed to Aristotle. For this reason, some people call such works "*manhu*". *Athologia* is, in fact, a summary of Enneads which was written probably by the Neo-Platonist philosopher, Proclus. *Kitab al-'ilal* is an independent book written by him

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