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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE OF IBNARABI'S POINTS OF VIEW ON THE ETERNITY OF TORMENT BASED ON ALLAMEHTABATABA'I'S IDEAS

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### ABSTRACT

One of the issues highly focused by the Islamic scholars in terms of the discussion of resurrection, is the issue of divine rewards and punishment. The punishment for some of sins in Islam is the eternal stay and eternity in hell, but whether the eternal life in the fire of hell is about constant punishment or it can be discontinued, is a bone of contention among the scholars. In opposition to the jurists and the versed in the religious law, IbnArabi believes that the torment in hell is not eternal, and it has a particular duration and stated term, and after this time is passed, the inhabitants of hell would enjoy a blessing, different from that of the inhabitants of paradise, as they take to themselves a 'Narayah' (of fire) nature and would not suffer torment and pain anymore. The current study is a library-based study with descriptive-analytical method. It is aimed at comparison between the opposing ideas of IbnArabi and AllamehTabataba'i, about the torment in resurrection. While IbnArabi believes that the hell's inhabitants torment can be discontinued, AllamehTabataba'i is opposed to him, believing that their torment is eternal, and it cannot be discontinued.

**Key words:** IbnArabi, AllamehTabataba'i, the Holy Quran, eternal life, doom of the hereafter

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### INTRODUCTION

Discussion of the divine rewards and punishments in the world hereafter, and the quality and quantity of doom of the hereafter, especially the eternity of the hell torment, which has stunned the intellectuals and the versed of the religious law, cannot be easily judged (Bathayi, p.1). A significant part of the life-giving teachings of Holy Quran is about the determination of divine rewards and hereafter gifts for the worldly deeds of people, and have considered everlasting hereafter torment for some sins. Although all the Islamic scholars including the philosephers, jurists, and theologians have agreed to accept the principle of "eternal stay" or eternity in Hell (Toosi, pp.581-3; Ghazi, 1988, p.666; Ash'ari, 1984, pp.149-50; Shahrestani, 1990, p.139), there are fundamental contradictions among the religious scholars in terms of the details (AjvadiandSabaghchi, 2009, p.1). However, the basic contradiction is on the issue whether the torment of the inhabitant of hell is discontinued from him and he would enjoy blessings in the hell or not (Mofid, 1992, Ghazi, 1988, Sharestani, 1990). The main theorist of torment discontinuance among the Sufi's is IbnArabi. He, in his books, especially the Conquests of Mecca and FOCUS Al-hekam, has proposed this discussion, and based on the principles which are credited for him, believe that the torment is discontinued (Ebrahimi, 1998).

AllamehTabataba'i has also accepted the principle of eternal stay in torment, and believes that the Holy Quran has clearly stated the subject of eternal stay for some. He also asserts that the subject has been confirmed by the Ahl al-Bayt through several Hadiths, However, in terms of argumentation and general intellectual premises, the details and characteristics of what has been mentioned about resurrection in the religion cannot be proven. Therefore, our way in such matters is solely the transcendental reasoning and confirmation of the truths which have come about through revelation (SayedMazhari, 2010, pp.21-5). The current study is of descriptive-analytical type, seeking to evaluate if the hell's fire inhabitants doom of the hereafter is discontinued. IbnArabi, the great theosophist, believes that they will be released from the torment of fire. However, Allameh's opinion is in contrast to IbnArabi's point of view, and he believes that the inhabitants of hell would eternally stay in it, and there is no emancipation and separation from punishment for them. This article attempts to criticize IbnArabi's views on eternity of the doom of the hereafter, through the ideas of AllamahTabatabai.

### IbnArabi's Point of View on Eternity of Torment

Among the Sufis and the theosophists, Ibn 'Arabi, who is trying, before and above all, to prove the theory of the discontinuance of torment, is IbnArabi. In his books, especially the conquests of Mecca and FOCUS Al-hekam, he has argued

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this subject and, for reasons that are valid for him, he has concluded that the torment of the inhabitants of the hell is discontinued. His followers and exegetes such as Sadr al-Din Qunavi, Davood Qaisari, Abdul Razzaq Kashani, Tajeddin Khwarazmi and others, have also shared his beliefs and strengthened this theory. IbnArabi believes that the people doomed to hell, would enter it. Those who do not merit exiting the hell, i.e. the people of fire, would eternally stay in that place and would never exit it. However, after a long period of pain and torment, the God blessing would embrace them and they will be blessed in the same place, and hell will be a good place for them, so that if they look at Paradise, they will become anguished and sad (IbnArabi, 2017, Vol.3, p.411). Therefore, although the inhabitants of hell may stay in it forever, they would be emancipated from their pains and torments after some time, and the torment would be softened and degraded for them. Basically, the appellation of torment is that its return is to the perish ability and sweetness (IbnArabi, 1992, Vol.3, p.25).

He believes in ultimate redemption of all the sinners and the disobedient and states that the torment, in the form of pain, would be discontinued, even for the infidels, and asserts that the infidels, though eternally staying in hell's fire and never released from it, would be accustomed to fire after some time, and as a result, the period of torment, meaning pain and torture would be over, and the time of prosperity and blessing would come, and the torment would become sweet. In this state, the punishment is named 'torment' due to sweetness of its taste, and the word 'Adhaab' (torment) is originally derived from 'Adhab' meaning 'sweet'. IbnArabi believes in discontinuance and separation of torment from the sinners. He believes in discontinuance of torment, meaning pain, from all the sinners including the infidel, and this idea is opposed to the idea of the consensus of Islam that all the Muslims, including the Shiites and Sunnis who believe as the inhabitants of Paradise would eternally stay in it, the infidels also stay in hell forever and suffer from pain and torture (kashani, 2017, p.101). However, IbnArabi, as was mentioned, despite not being opposed to this consensus apparently, believes in eternal stay of the infidels in hell's fire and the eternity of their torment, but actually he has come to a consensus because he has stated this terrible, yet bizarre, and enduring conviction that the infidels get accustomed to fire after staying in it for a while, in hell.

As a result, the fire becomes sweet and soft to them and the torment becomes sweet, as it was for Ibrahim, and mercy of God precedes his wrath. Obviously, he has knowingly deviated the torment from its idiomatic meaning, which is pain and torture, and gave it a non-idiomatic meaning. This way, he is not evidently opposed to the ideas of the Muslim on eternal stay of the infidel in the hell's fire, and at the same time, represented his opinion in agreement with those of the Islamic scholars, while he was actually opposed to their opinion on eternal stay of the infidel in hell, in a way that he asserted that the torment, meaning pain and torture, is realized for all the sinners in hell, and simultaneously, stated his idea on the torment, meaning sweet and soft, as he stated that the sinners after a while, though long and unknown for us, that suffer from fire, and see pain and torture, this torture is not eternal and in the end, all the sinners would enjoy blessing and prosperity in hell, and this way, the torment, meaning pain, changes into the torment, meaning sweet and soft, derived from sweetness and perishability (Aqaed Al-nafisah, pp. 144-8; SharhMaqasid, vol.2, pp.228-9; Toosi, p.328), and finally, the mercy and

blessing of God would embrace all his servants, since he is the most merciful in the world and the hereafter (IbnArabi, 1992, vol.1, p.94; Kashani, p.10; Gheisari, p.213, IbnArabi, 2017, vol.1, p.303). So, Mohieddin does not consider the hell's inhabitants torment to be essential, as he also does not believe that the paradise inhabitants blessing is obligatory, and both of the subjects are just possible in his view (IbnArabi, vol.1, p.263). It should be noted that as IbnArabi does not consider the continuance of torment to be obligatory, he also does not deem the continuance of blessing to be essential, as in his book, the conquest of Mecca, he writes: "it is true that the divine nature of pleasures requires some calamities and blessing in the world, but it is not necessary for these calamities and blessings to be eternal, except for the God's will, since the world is a world of possibilities, and any possibility, as it is viable for one of the contradictions, is also usable for one of the contradictions, therefore, in the hereafter, eternal stay in torment is not obligatory, as is the case for eternal stay in blessing, however, both of them are possible (ibid, p.263).

However, he believes that there are definite and intact texts about the eternal stay of inhabitants of paradise in blessing. In this regard, he cites the Quranic verse "The Day when He gathers you for the Day of Gathering—that is the Day of Mutual Exchange. Whoever believes in God and acts with integrity, He will remit his misdeeds, and will admit him into gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme achievement" (at-Taghabun, verse 9), and responds to the ambiguity of those who say as the torment is not eternal, the blessing is also not eternal, as the Almighty God said about the blessing of the paradise inhabitants in verse 108 of Surah Hud, "a reward without end", which means their blessing would not be ended. Also, in verse 33 of Surah al-Waqi'ah, he asserts "Neither withheld, nor forbidden" (IbnArabi, 2017, vol.3, p.77). Therefore, in his point of view, belief in eternity of paradise blessing is necessary and obligatory. On the contrary, there are no texts available, based on his opinion about the eternity and continuance of the torment and the pain of the hell's inhabitants (IbnArabi, 1992, p.673), and the texts implied by the jurists and scholars, about the eternal stay in hell's torment, are justifiable and interpretable, since the source of eternity in all those verses and narrations, is fire (and not torment), in way that hell is eternal in terms of its fire. It is the fire of the hell which is eternal, however in terms of torment for its inhabitants, it is not eternal in no way. For instance, in the verses such as "these are the inmates of the Fire—wherein they will remain forever" (al-Baqara, verse 39), and "Dwelling therein forever, not finding a protector or a savior" (al-Ahzab, verse 65), the reference of the singular pronoun in the verse "KhaledinFiha" (dwelling therein), is the word 'fire' and not the word 'torment' (IbnArabi, 2017, vol.3, p.77).

In addition, there are no texts or clarifications citing the eternity of torment. IbnArabi believes that there are no intellectual reasons for continuance of torment (IbnArabi, 2017, vol.4, p.175; IbnArabi, 1992, vol.1, p.263), but on the contrary, there are numerous intellectual reasons proving the discontinuance of torment, such as the reasoning of the loyalty to false appointment which is unlike to the true promise, not essential. He states in Fosus al-Hekam: "The possibility of the right has expired because of the likely demand. All that remains is the truth of the promise alone and the promise of truth in the eyes of the blind" (IbnArabi, 1992, p.94).

Elaborating the above narration, it can be said that commitment to the true promise is obligatory, meaning that God's commitment to his promises on the paradise blessings, in the Quranic verses for his virtuous servants, is inevitable and essential, however, on the contrary, his commitment to the infidel and sinners, on tormenting them, is neither obligatory nor impossible, but it is possible and realization of a possible act requires a reason and preference that take it beyond the limit of reaction. The false appointment preference (possible act) is a sin, while God has promised forgiving the sins and wrongdoings in some verses, and this promise would definitely be realized due to its obligation. Therefore, the reason and preference of commitment to false appointment, which is a sin, would be obviated through God's mercy and intercession of the Prophet to the oppressors and sinners, and transformation of torment to sweetness, and torture to blessing for the infidel. Therefore, the commitment to false appointment is eliminated, since by elimination of the cause, the effect will also not be realized (Qaisari, 1985, pp.211-2). The problem which arises here is that if the torment eternity is not obligatory, the great names of Almighty God, such as the Revengeful, the Subdue, and the like, would be meaningless, and it is not permissible (Rasael of IbnTimiyah, p.125). In response to such an ambiguity, IbnArabi states that the traits, descendants and additions, and descendants and additions are non-existent things, except for the unique nature of God, and therefore it is possible that at the end, the blessings of God would embrace his servants, and he would not make the torment eternal for them, as he states in Conquests of Mecca: "for one whose traits are descendants and additions, except the unique nature, it is permissible in all ways that he forgive the servants at the end, and would not continue tormenting them eternally" (IbnArabi, vol.1, p.163); (Jahangiri, 1997, vol.1).

#### **AllamehTabataba'i Points of View about Eternal Stay in Torment**

In Tafsir Al-Mizan, Allameh has beautifully and reasonably introduced the discussion of eternal stay in torment, and responded to the related problems. He believed in eternal stay in torment and stated that there are numerous verses and narrations in this regard, which are undeniable. He asserted that the reason also confirms and endorses this theory, and there is complete harmony between reason and religion. However, there are contradictions in terms of rational and narrative reasons, and some believe in the subject of eternal stay and it is proven for them. On the contrary, some believe that the torment is not eternal for anyone. What is obvious is that it is clearly cited in Holy Quran and the Hadiths, however, the details and characteristics of the subject cannot be proven by the rational reasons and general wisdom percepts, since our intellect is unable to comprehend the details, therefore, our only way in this matter is narrative reasoning and confirming the truths that have come to us through the revelation. However, about the rational blessing or punishments that a person tolerates due to his good deeds or wrongdoings, or due to acquisition of good and bad states, it should be said that these states and situations are realized in their real form (good or bad) for the human nature, and the person is blessed with their good forms, on the condition that they are intrinsically auspicious, and he may also suffer from their ugly forms and would be tormented (Tabataba'i, 2015, p.628). If the bad tempers and ugly-face states do not change the soul of person, and do not merit this soul, it means that the nature has been auspicious, and it has intrinsically taken evil forms and states

to it, such as the case for the sinful believers, and such a 'soul' would ultimately release that face, and those states would be eliminated, since it is a compulsive and unnatural state. However, if these sordid and evil states enter the ego, and they become real or a new real face, in a way the 'soul' is changed due to their effect, such as the case for the type of "mean person" whose human face has changed into envy, as is the speaking ability is his animal nature, and due to this, it is a new face for the nature of animal, in this case, a new immaterial type is created under the name of human which will always exist, and all the act he does when this state is not realized, is compulsory for him, because now they are derived from the typicality, and not from the compulsive state. This man who is tormented due to his deeds, is in a way similar to a patient who suffers from an eternal Melancholia or nightmare, whose imagination always make horrible faces that torment him, while his 'soul' creates these faces without any compulsion or obligation and in such a state, it is not good for this patient, and he would be suffered by these diseases. Although such a person is not anguished by what is done by him as was mentioned before, the theory that torment is the same thing that man tries to evade it before it happens, and wants to be saved from it after its happening, would be true in such cases (Tabataba'i, 1987, p.89). Therefore, what is suffered by the evil 'soul' in the hereafter due to the painful forms that are effect of their eternal stay in hell is an example of torment. Thus, according to this rational reasoning, it should be said such a 'soul' whose villainy is the requirement for his nature, would suffer from an eternal and discontinued stay in hell. Allameh has elaborated on the questions raised by some of the eternal stay deniers and considers all of them to be completely false. Some of the problems are as follows: the mercy of God is extensive and limitless. With such a liberal mercy, how is it possible that he creates a creature whose end is eternal torment?

Torment is torment when there is an exceptional, compulsive, and opposed-to-nature state. Therefore, how is it possible that there is eternal torment when the compulsive states are never everlasting? The sins of the servants are always limited and discontinued, but how is it possible their punishment is limitless and eternal? From the point of view of the world of creation and genesis, the services served by the evil are not less than the services provided by the prosperous, and if they did not exist, the prosperous would have not reached prosperity, so why are they eternally tormented? The tormenting of the sinners and disobedient might be intended for revenge, and revenge is assumed for the cases in which compensation and obviation of defects made by the sinner to the mighty avenger, are intended, and such a case is not true for the Almighty God who is the absolute power. Therefore, how is it possible he torment someone, let alone the eternal torment? Allameh deems the denial of these problems to be clear, based on what he has stated about eternal torment, since the eternal torment is among the effects and specifications of the face of villainy, which the prerequisite for an evil 'soul'. Therefore, after the human nature took the evil face to itself, and due to the intense talent created in him by the optional state, is realized by villainy, there would be no place for the question that why the devices and effects of villainy embraces him? The answer is because in all cases, the intense and absolute talent leads to addition of proper forms of that talent, as in other cases, this is not a question, for example why the humanistic material, after taking the human form, is the source of human acts? Also, there is no place for the mentioned question on the effects of

villainy, among which is the eternal torment. Anyways, this issue refers back to the human's option and with this expression, the response to all the mentioned problems is clear (Tabataba'i, 2015, vol.1, p.625). The late Allameh, then deals with responding to the mentioned problems and asserts in response to the first ambiguity: by the mercy of God, it is meant that God grants the mercy based on the absolute talents that can be obtained by the capable person, and granting the villainy form, which is prerequisite for the eternal torment, to someone with intense talent for it, is not opposed to the general mercy of God, but it is the circumstance for his general mercy. Moreover, if the mentioned problem is true, it is not pertained to the eternal torment, and it also includes the discontinued hereafter torment and even the worldly punishments. In response to the second ambiguity, it should be said: the effects made by the evil 'soul' is in accordance with his villainy which has created a specific typical form and in this regard, there is no compulsion, while it is hated by him and he is not satisfied with him consciously; such as a person with melancholia that imaginations are made by him and make him suffer. About the third ambiguity, it should be noted that torment is not among the effects of limited sins, but is an effect of the villainy form which is always constant for the evil 'soul', and the sins are the causes of acquisition of villainy form. The response to the fourth ambiguity is that services provided by the infidel and the sinners, is of the developmental public worship and not the peculiar worship. The public worship requires public mercy, and not the specific mercy, and torment for them is the very public mercy. Besides, if the mentioned problem is true, its prerequisite is denial of any kinds of discontinued worldly and hereafter torment. And finally, in response to the fifth ambiguity, it should be said that attribution of the punishment of the perpetrators and the infidels to God is similar to documenting all beings to him. The eternal torment is similar to a documented villainy which is realized for the person as a result of his deeds. Besides, the prerequisite for this ambiguity is denial of any kinds of torment (Tabataba'i, 2015, vol.1, pp. 622-8).

#### **Critique of IbnArabi Point of View by AllamehTabataba'i**

IbnArabi believed that the inhabitants of fire would be released from their torment after a while they are punished for their deeds, however they would stay in hell, but won't be tormented anymore. Regarding IbnArabi's point of view, Allameh states that inhabitants of the fire would stay in it forever and would not be released from it, even for a second, since it is the result of their worldly villainy, and the hereafter is the place for punishment and reward. In Allameh Tabataba'i's point of view also, if the vile morals and ugly states of men have not been uncovered in the soul, i.e. the soul has been of good souls and it has taken evil states and forms under influence (such as the sinner souls), finally, such effects would be eliminated in such a soul, because such states are unnatural and compulsive for the sinner believer, and the eternal obligation is obviated. However, if such ugly and improper traits and states are uncovered in the soul, in a way that human soul is changed into a new real form, and finds a new typicality, this new immaterial type is not a compulsive and affected type, but it is eternal and intrinsic. Such souls whose nature requirement is villainy would suffer sternal and discontinued torment (Tabataba'i, 2015, vol.1, pp.413-4). It became clear that the critics and those opposed to discontinuance of torment, namely AllamehTabataba'i and some of the philosophers, agree on the fact that hell's

inhabitants are divided into two groups: the first group are those who have not lost their initial natural monotheism, but due to the improper behavior and states, adverse effects are uncovered in them in a compulsive way, however these compulsive effects would be eliminated and ultimately, this group of people would return to their initial nature and their torment would be discontinued. Another group is the people with beliefs such as infidelity uncovered in them, in a way that a new typical nature is created. In the opposition point of view, the torment of this group of people, who would stay in hell, is eternal and would never, be discontinued. In "Talfah Vojuhohom al-Nar vaHomFihaKalehounam" (The Fire lashes their faces, and therein they grimace), in the book Majma'a al-Bayan, the words 'talfah' and 'Nafh' are synonymous, with only difference that the word 'talfah' has higher effects, which means skin toxication that corrupts the skin, but the word 'Nafh' means an intense wind that annoys the skin of the face, and the word 'kaleh' is derived from 'Koluh' which means that the lips are tucked up and dried, so that it can no longer cover the teeth.

The meaning of this verse is that the fume of fire hits their faces and their lips are smeared so that their teeth appear, such as the head of a sheep that is on fire. In the verse "Were My revelations not recited to you? But you turned arrogant, and were guilty people." God asks the infidel that were my verses not recited to you. Were you not who denied it? the infidel come to find their deeds punishment, and find out that they themselves collected villainy in the world, so they request to return to world to perform good deeds, which shows that they themselves were responsible and effective in dominance of villainy, and if the prosperity and villainy were not optional and adventitious, then the promise would have been meaningless, because if they return from hell to the world, they would have the initial state, but they find themselves faulty and dominated by their villainy, and admit that their villainy was not a part of their nature, but it was attached to them and was uncovered in them, and when it was uncovered, the ultimatum was over. Sinners know that in the world, confessing to their sin and disobedience, purifies them and saves them from the effects of wrong guilty, however, God in the verse "Be despised therein, and do not speak to Me" disappoints them, and they are disappointed with their salvation. God points out that what you ask for, which is confessing to your crime, is a form of action that can be done in the world and hereafter is a place for punishment.

The word 'Yaftar' which the passive present form of 'Taftir', meaning 'to reduce', and the word 'Moblesun' which is the plural form of the gerund 'Eblas', meaning 'to disappoint', it is stated that: the sinners in hell are disappointed from the mercy of God and returning from hell. God states: We were not evil on them, but themselves did evil things, because the Almighty God only gave them the punishment for their deeds, so they were evil. The disbelievers who are disappointed from mercy of God, ask the guardian of hell, to ask God to let their death come. It means that the sinners want to completely vanish and disappear, so in this way, they would be released from torment, however it shows that even when they were in the world, they considered the death to be inexistence, and not transition from one house to another, so they ask for death in hell, with the same meaning of death they had in mind while they were in world. The guardian of hell responds: No, you shall remain in this miserable life and painful torment. We brought you the right, but you abominated the right and it is

the very monotheism and the Holy Quran. However, this abomination is based on the secondary nature, created as a result of continuously committing the sins, since no human, due to his initial nature granted by God, abominates the right, and human nature is based on the right and if it was not like this, and human abominated the right according to his nature, then obligating them to the right would not be rational and wise.

## Conclusion

IbnArabi, based on his interpretations from the verses and narrations, concludes that the torment of those eternally staying in hell is discontinued. AllamehTabataba'i believes that based on the face of the verses and narrations, and also the rational argument, there is eternal stay in fire and eternal torment for the disobedient and the infidel, and they would not be released from torment. Also, Allameh believes that what is proven by IbnArabi for discontinuance of torment of those staying eternally in fire is not the reason for torment discontinuance, and on the contrary, it leads to the sternal stay of the hell's inhabitants in fire. Regarding the narrative and intellectual reasoning provided for eternal stayers in torment, there are two ambiguities:

- Lack of equity and agreement between the punishment and the deed, in case of eternal stay in torment
- Contradiction between the divine mercy and justice, and the eternal torment

It should be noted that scholars such as Allameh, have responded to this ambiguity that infidelity, disobedience, and disbelief, have prevailed the hypocrites and infidels and it is a part of their nature, which cannot be vanished, and lead to their eternal stay in fire. However, committing great sins does not lead to eternal stay in torment, and though great sins are disobedience from the order of God and his Prophet, their punishment is not eternal stay in torment. What may cause eternal stay in torment is disobedience from the orders of God and his prophet, and denial of them, which leads to apostasy and disbelief, and this is what makes them eternally stay in torment. Based on what was mentioned, the torment of the eternal stayers in fire is of two kinds:

- Physical torment
- Spiritual and immaterial torment

The latter is more harsh and painful. The most intense spiritual punishment for the infidel and their friends is deprivation from meeting God and his mercy, and his loving kindness.

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