

Religious and Mystic Views of Ahmad Donish

by

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Abstract

The article reveals the religious and mystical views of the Central Asian thinker Ahmad Donish. The author of the article has analyzed his various works, such as Navodir-ul-wakoe. The article also outlines the scientific thoughts of Ahmad Donish about the role of religion in the development of society.

Keywords. Religion, the human body, the good of man, spiritual perfection

Ahmad Donish (1827-1897) is one of the great scientists and thinkers who left a significant mark in the development of philosophical and historical thought, in the spiritual heritage of the peoples of Central Asia. He was born in Bukhara. He wrote his works under the pseudonym Donish, and among the people he was lovingly called Ahmad Mahdumi Muhandis, Ahmad Mahdumi Muenzhim, Ahmadi Mahdumi Donish, and Ahmadi Kalla.

The publication of his works has also been partially completed in the Tajik language as “Parchaho az Navodir ul-wakoe,”¹ “Asarhoei muntahab,”² in Russian “Travel from Bukhara to St. Petersburg,”³ and in the Uzbek language “Navodir ul-wakoe,”⁴ in abbreviated form.

Ahmad Donish left a rich philosophical, historical and literary heritage, which is studied in many countries. In particular, scholars such as S. Aini, I. Muminov, Z. Sh. Rajabov, E. Bertels, R. Hodizoda, A. A. Khaidarov and others published a number of articles and monographs that analyzed the works of Ahmad Donish.

Understanding the need for change, Donish was ahead of his time. He put forward the idea of restricting the rights of an absolute monarch by creating an advisory body following the example of European parliaments and also proposed creating ministries and streamlining local government. At the same time, he could not refuse to support those traditional forms of government that were developed over the centuries by Muslim rulers and Muslim jurisprudence.

Donish’s attitude to religion was also special and peculiar. He was against the thought of religious leaders, as “in order to achieve the love of God, a person should abandon worldly life and devote himself only to serving him.” In his opinion, a person in this life should live in pleasure and good, and for this, he must acquire knowledge and use it in his activities. “Some people believe that God gives everything to man and do nothing. But the people themselves produce material wealth,” said Donish (1964, p. 142). In the work “Navodir ul-vagoye”, he notes, “The gift of nawodiri Kolate kasone, ki az geni sibob raxoi yeftand” that is, “If we sit back and wait, we won’t

¹ Published in Dushanbe in 1957.

² Published in Dushanbe in 1959.

³ Published in Dushanbe in 1960.

⁴ Published in Tashkent in 1964.

lose bread and grain from heaven. Therefore, man must work.” Despite the fact that Ahmad Donish expressed his peculiar thoughts, he was a true Muslim.

If a person leaves everything to his life and good to the mercy of fate, and waits for God to give him all the material benefits, doing nothing, lazy and not working, then he will never achieve anything, and such a person is considered lost in his life and is a big fool (Donish, 1964, p. 120). Material wealth does not appear on its own. A person must know the means and reasons for the extraction of these goods.

It is necessary to consider that Man is the “Monster” who got lost in this world, and if there were no man in this world, then “the tremendous art and power of Allah would remain invisible behind the dark curtains (Nosirov & Karimov, 2006).” Only through social activity and intellectual enthusiasm does a person achieve spiritual perfection. And if one hopes only for fate and surrenders to passivity, then a person and even society can be defeated (Slovo, 1998).

The thinker writes the following about a person’s life: “If a person observes the rules of proper eating, he strictly follows the daily routine and hygiene requirements, he will certainly live for one hundred twenty or even more years.”

Donish was not against religion. On the contrary, he insisted that its role in the development of the country is huge. With democratic changes in power in Bukhara, he believed that the educational features of religion should be used. He argued that no religion should be persecuted.

To date, this issue remains relevant, and it is reflected in article 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It states: “Freedom of conscience is guaranteed for all. Everyone has the right to profess any religion or not to profess any. Forced propagation of religious views is unacceptable. The third article of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations,” writes: “Freedom of conscience is the constitutional legal guarantee of citizens freedom when choosing the true faith.” The fourth article of the same Law says: “Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan regardless of their attitude to religion and religion are equal before the law” (Donish, 1960, p. 238).

In the chapter “On Craftsmen” of the book “Navodir ul-vakoe,”⁵ the thinker argues that the most correct and respected occupation is to study the basics of Sharia, which illuminates our mind and soul. In addition, he approves the activities of people who are engaged in the knowledge of Kalam, that is, religious law, the teachings of Fatawa, i.e. writing legal documents, and calligraphy, medicine, clerical work, astronomy, poetry and training. In his opinion, they develop a public opinion, educate the human mind and soul. Donish’s attitude to religion is depicted in the work “Nomus-ul-azam” meaning “The Great Law.” This book gives information about the main currents of the religion of Islam, Sunni Islam and Shiism, about their similarity and difference.

In the book “Navodir ul-vagoye” he writes: “Paradise is for Muslims, Hell for kofirs⁶” but among Muslims there are such spoiled and duplicitous people who are considered worse than “a disbeliever” (Donish, 1964, p. 22).

The thinker is trying to find the reasons for the religious differences. Representatives of the clergy⁷ do not care about ordinary people. They profit and get rich due to the labor of the people. “Everyone should bow before the Imam, and are bound without obedience to carry out all his orders. The main reason for the disagreement of the representatives of the Shiites and Sunnis is precisely this.” By this, the thinker criticizes the greedy and greedy activities of leading representatives of religious societies.

⁵ rare incidents

⁶ The atheists

⁷ mullahs

Today, negative phenomena and ideologies like religious extremism, fundamentalism, fanaticism, dogmatism are dangerous threats. Their goal is to seize power and rule the people on their own whims. The first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. A. Karimov, expressing his thoughts, said: “Religion Islam is for us the faith of our ancestors and we must always remember that it is for us both conscience, morality, and enlightenment” (Karimov, 1996, p. 39).

According to Ahmad Donish, the significance of each religion is known in its ministry for the peoples in a joint and collaborative life. In the work “Tips for the Reconciliation of Shiites and Sunnis,” he writes about the history of formation and the reasons for the contention of the two movements in Islam. According to his arguments, the main goal of religion should not be to complicate the relations between representatives of different movements, but rather to call them to tolerance. Proceeding from his convictions, the thinker criticizes the discord between the various currents, and advises that the differences between them should be resolved by reason in a peaceful way (Donish, 1964, p. 169). Donish writes: “... to bring out the good power of man, and to prevent greed by conquering the soul of man, Sharia law has been created.” In addition, he noted: “Basically, the rules of the Quran are taken from the established rules and beliefs of the Badawi tribe, which consists of a large number of Arabs” (Donish, 1964, p. 169).

Ahmad Donish read the works of Ibn Sino, Omar Khayyam, Navai, Jami, Fuzuli, Bedil with great interest and their influence on his attitude to life was noticeable. In that the eternal Universe, he agreed with the views of Omar Khayyam, while in the teachings about the soul and body, he used the views of Bedil.

When checking the relationship between body and soul, various philosophical views of Ahmad Donish were more strongly manifested. In the beginning, Ahmad Donish recognized the beliefs of the idealistic and scholastic views of the Middle Ages. He wrote that the relationship between soul and body is a complex problem, (Donish, 1964, p. 169) but in modern times, Donish, continuing his thoughts on the relationship of soul and body, criticizes the views of the scholastics of the Middle Ages. He writes: “When you are asked what the ninth layer of Heaven is, you will answer” Arsh⁸ and if they ask, “What is next? you cannot answer, because the Mind cannot answer and explain what is above it”. Continuing his thoughts, he says: “Reason can understand and explain what is below it, and it cannot afford to think about what is above it”. In his opinion, the soul has two types: “One of them is a structureless invisible phenomenon, and the second is a complex phenomenon. The initial ray of light of life descending from Allah is called the invisible soul and the soul that encompasses all space and is located below the “Arsh”, and in order to create a Man and passing into the structure of stars, the Sun and the Moon are called a complex soul”(Donish, 1964, p. 169).

Ahmad Donish concludes: “There are four elements: fire, water, earth and air. The Creator shows his art and strength from these four elements and collects the human body. Then, the most excellent and most transparent complex kind of soul is introduced into the human body” (Donish, 1964, p. 22).

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that Ahmad Donish was a very smart and morally educated person. The life, work and views of Ahmad Donish attracted the attention of scientists, researchers, and philosophers since his scientific contribution is relevant today.

The place of Ahmad Donish in the history of Uzbekistan is significant. At one time, Ahmad Donish is the founder of the enlightenment trend with his advanced ideas awakened the Jadids. On the other hand, it is necessary to add that Ahmad Donish can be considered the last thinker-encyclopedist in Central Asia.

⁸ where the Creator is

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