



Magic and Religion

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Abstract: *Magic is an old element that is the product of human thought with empty hands and simple tools. Humans used it in disaster and it has long prevailed in the public culture of human society. Study of the history of religions suggests that belief in magic and witchcraft existed in parts of the life of people of that time. And the same beliefs get stronger in times of crisis and despair of life of people. It can be said that human somehow was seeking to achieve prosperity. And one of the factors that led humans to the magic and witchcraft is seeking bliss. In addition, recourse to actions and matters that are specious and have non-scientific theme, was more common when the society went towards religious superstition and divine intervention, and the like and as a result the market of witches and wizards was hot. In this descriptive-analytic paper, it can be found that with the emergence of religion, humans accept that there is a power above all the powers that is the reason of all the effects and human can change his tendency from magic and witchcraft to religion.*

Keywords: *magic, witch, wizard, humans, religions*

INTRODUCTION

Magic is one of the first manifestations of human culture that has appeared based on human communities. It is the remnants of the period when man lived in a world full of the unknown. The origins of the culture of many nations is related to beliefs and myths, each of which represents a specific need and reflects the aspirations to achieve their goals. And also, humans, based on their natural instinct, seek to uncover secrets and truths about themselves in order to preserve their life. Consequently, to keep their benefit and keep away from harm, they found it necessary to know the causes of accidents and to change them to their favor. So, they use foolish and superstitious practices, to conquer nature. Belief in witchcraft was not only common in uncivilized and primitive nations but also among many people of the civilized nations of the world. And people at any situation seek help from magic to achieve their goals.

With the emergence of religion as a factor in human life as well as a complete solution that meets many natural and spiritual needs, humans were pushed towards knowledge and awareness, and stepped on the path of pure life, thus, magic partly lost its power. Magic is discussed in the literature of many scholars, including: the history of witchcraft as a book that is written by Iraj Golsorkhi. In this study, the results of studies by eminent scientist in the history of witchcraft are discussed, and it was published in 1988 in the publication of Elm. The Golden Bough (A Study in Magic and Religion) written by James George Frazer is another example and it was translated by Kazem Firouzmand in 2013. This book is a comparative cultural study of myth and religion. It is an important book which wants to show the common features of primary religions with modern ones such as Christianity.

Magic in view of science and religion is a book written by Mohammed Kazem Kimiayi about magic, metaphysics, spell and so on and published in Parto publication in 2006. Functions of magic in the magical legends is another book written by Pegah Khadish in Faculty of Literature and Humanities in 2009. In this writing by content analysis of magical legends, many of the motifs of the first ancient human thought, such as animal identification, personification of objects can be found. Review of magic and sorcery is written by Afshin Mirabdolah Lavasani which is about magic in human life, and was published in Gozaresh Journal in 2008-2009. In comparison with conducted researches and this research we can say that in this study we try to find the role of religion in the magic and how it makes it weak.

Magic as a word:

Magic is the same as voodoo, witchcraft and illusion (Amide, 2010: magic word). The word used in Arabic for magic is Sehr. In the Al-Mufradat fi Gharib for words in Quran there are three meanings for this word:

1. Deception and illusions without reality like magic and sleight of hand.
2. The specific methods to draw demons to seek help from them.
3. Changing the nature and form of individuals and entities with special equipment (Raghib Isfahani, 1991, p. 400).

Delve into the original meaning of the word shows that it means showing falsehood as truth and changes in the nature and form of individuals and entities by Secret affair and deception by people and it leads to Satan.

Magic as an idiom

It is an extraordinary action that leaves traces of itself in human existence, and sometimes and illusion and sleight of hand and sometimes it has only mental aspects (Makarem Shirazi, 1995: vol. 1, p. 377).

Magic has special applications by primitive human, in order to turn attention of humans on other creatures and involving them in the brokerage of world as well as the revitalization of the world; Because in his view the world with all manifestations has already come to an end, and the only excuse to reinvent it are these belief and actions (Azizi Far, 2013, p. 84). In the book of The Golden Bough, magic is based on two principles:

First is that it makes everything similar to itself or any effect resembles its cause. Second, things that once had been together, after the cessation of physical contact, will influence each other from a distance (Frazer, 2013: p. 87).

According to the definitions, we can say: magic in its idiomatic term is a kind of supernatural power that has impacts created by imagination, and gives a truth color to impossible things.

Magician

Witch or sorcerer, or the charmer is the one who does magic (Amid, 2010; Moen, 2008). It can be said: A wizard or a witch is a genius with high intelligence that can use special spells and objects do something that others fail to do and in this way, influence the phantasm people and prevail nature. In fact, wizard is a person who represent rites, the purpose of which is to control unknown forces. Which is in line with the rites or origins that are symbolic, or keep up with the demands of most people that has been done by spells and

special actions. The witch works in a way to discourage the eyes about they have seen and the hear about what it has understood to use imagination instead of the truth. Magical practices have long been very popular. When the man did not know the cause of the phenomena and natural events, he thought that everything is in the hands of unknown forces. And that he can read the spells and use them and do events to overcome these forces. Earliest people thought the Earth, Moon and Sun had emotions such as anger, love and hate, and events such as storms and earthquakes are result of their power, anger, love or hate (Mirhadi, Gorgin: 1987, p. 154).

So, people as magicians used the opportunity and in form of capable and intelligent humans tried to affect the imagination of people by reading spells and performing specific tasks. In some cases, people were waiting for their encouraging participation for next meetings because they believed in magicians. Of course, it is also necessary to mention that in some cases wizards aimed to harass others. The materials that wizards use include words, charm, signs, pictures, letters, password and the like. But use of these things depend on the power and influence of the wizard (Azadegan, 2009, p. 5). Wizards have special symbols, containers and tools, which resulted in their authority over the people. What is important to mention is that these tools and signs have no effect on the goals of magicians, and what gives them power is the development of their internal forces which leads to effect of the magic, that can tame nature and has an important role in the authority of these people. Perhaps the words that a wizard uses or what he is doing are the same things that ordinary people can do too, but what is important is that their speech and their actions are so entrenched in people's mind and thoughts that they can become the most influential and the most popular among the common people, especially among primitive people.

It should be noted that what the wizard will do is in the range of his existence, hence there are deficiencies and sometimes it is possible to fail. Because it is limited and untrue.

The role of religions in weakening Magic

Subject of magic and sorcery among religions has a long history. Curious man who sought to know unknowns fast and without trouble, weather willingly or not, was drawn to magic and witchcraft.

In the sacred writings, it is spoken about magics as if there is no doubt about its existence. There, magic is real. There has been extensive discussion about the beginning of witchcraft and sorcerer, from Scrolls, pictures, signs and objects obtained from archaeological excavations it was understood that witchcraft and sorcerers has been common among people since the immemorial times. Before the advent of monotheistic religions and prophets as well as the emergence and development of science, Myths and Magic were accepted like faith and religion by ancient people. They deal with magic as they later deal with monotheistic religions. In fact, the myth was a tool that meets the everyday needs of people.

In the history of religions and nations, two diametrically opposed approaches to magic and witchcraft existed, a Sacred, divine and beneficial approach = White Magic and the unholy, evil and harmful approach = black magic. Harmful Black magic and beneficial white magic were always against each other, and as we see in Gnostics thoughts, the good and evil and light and darkness are two endless powers, and it was the same in magic (sharifian; Atoni, 2013, p. 2). Witchcraft in ancient times and among the people like Chaldeans, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Persians existed in various forms. Chaldeans believed that if fairies and demons get close to humans, they would harm humans and cause trouble and misery and sickness. So, human being should try to eliminate these insidious creatures and to dispose of them and eliminate the threat, it was necessary to resort to spells and special prayers. Therefore, they had to seek help from people

that read the spells and prayers against the insidious invisible creatures. According to them, this group of people, the priests and wizards could draw these insidious creatures and control them. Hence, for Chaldeans and Assyrians, these people had significant importance (Fazayi, 2003: p. 93).

People at the times of prophets turned away from magic and wizardry. And believed in God, the creator and owner of the universe, but with the demise of the Prophet and the passage of time and due to the influx of problems, they have fallen prey to superstition and sometimes they refer to wizards. After the death of Prophet Solomon (as), all notes that were gathered at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from among the people, were given back to the people again. And some began to spread and teach witchcraft, some used this opportunity and said that Prophet Solomon (as) has used magic to dominant the country. Some of Israelites also followed the wizards. Accordingly, in Babylon sorcery had reached its climax and Harut and Marut, from God came to them to dissuade people from witchcraft and wizardry. Verse 102 of Surah Baqarah witness that Allah says: And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. But the two angels do not teach anyone unless they say, We are a trial, so do not disbelieve. And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by permission of Allah. And the people learn what harms them and does not benefit them. And whoever purchased the magic would not have in the Hereafter any share. And wretched is that for which they sold themselves, if they only knew.

In fact, Magic of Wizards threatened faith, and religion and health and safety of people. They do things with magic that could impact on people about changing their minds about the subject of miracles. Thus, they doubted miracles too. So, God sent two angels Harut and Marut with purity to teach magic and to revoke it, to both teach them and remind them that magic is teachable and revocable unlike the miracle that is unteachable and cannot be revoked. But the people followed the demons in the era of Solomon (AS) and also learned Magic from Harut and Marut for their sinister purposes. In the era of Prophet Musa (AS) Witchcraft and Wizardry, was widespread in a wide range. So that people of that time considered working as a wizard as a perfection. Ignorant people turned to sorcerers to dispose of problems and losses and to harm others. Even kings like Pharaoh in Egypt to keep the regime and protect his throne, resorted to witches (Shahnavazi, 2003: p. 61).

Witness of this statement is from the Quran that says: Pharaonics said "Indeed, these are two magicians who want to drive you out of your land with their magic and do away with your most exemplary way, so resolve upon your plan and then come [forward] in line. And he has succeeded today who overcomes." Wizards said: "O Moses, either you throw or we will be the first to throw." He said, "Rather, you throw." And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him from their magic that they were moving. And he sensed within himself apprehension. Allah said, "Fear not. Indeed, it is you who are superior. And throw what is in your right hand; it will swallow up what they have crafted. What they have crafted is but the trick of a magician, and the magician will not succeed wherever he is." (Taha/ 69- 63). What is important in this speech is that the divine religions, know witchcraft against religious teachings. In the Middle Ages the Catholic priests of Church of Rome fought against sorcery and burned some people who were accused of witchcraft. With the advancement of science and knowledge confidence in magical beliefs has faded (Mirhadi, Gorgin, 1987, p. 154).

With the rise of religions such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the work of wizards gradually faded. They not only lost their place among the people, but were seen as the primarily enemy of these religions. In fact, these religions succeeded with all the power to erase wrong and superstitious beliefs and thoughts that came before them, and since magic and sorcery, were heritage traditions before emerging

religions, the magicians were seen as leaders of the beliefs and an enemy. In the remains of Zoroastrian religious books, magic and witchcraft is introduced as an evil profession everywhere (Sharifian; Atonic, 2013, p. 132). Magic and wizards in the books of the Old Testament (the Torah and books attached to it) is wrong and very bad, because in the Bible we read: Do not pay attention to owners of elves and do not look for wizards (lest) you become unclean and I am your God (Old Testament, Leviticus 19: 31).

And elsewhere in the Torah we read “and one who pay attention to owners of elves to follow adultery they must be cut off from their people” (ibid., Leviticus 20: 7).

In the Avesta, magic and sorcery are heavily criticized and considered evil deeds. Yatu in Avesta means magic and a magical demon of the same name is a symbol of Evil magic and has other demons following him (Razi, 2005: p. 188). Although Islam forbids magic but other supernatural sciences are free and even knows some of them derived from the prophets and imams. As the science of geomancy are considered from the discoveries of Daniel the prophet and the science of Jafar is from Hazrat Ali (AS), and continuation and completion is by Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) (Tanavoli, 2015: p. 11). Islam as a religion based on the belief that there is a single force that is beyond the forces of nature and human beings and he is a God with science and life and power. He is free to accept or reject prayers and human cannot have an effect on his will. Accordingly, people began to believe in the unity instead of magic. All-round condemnation of witchcraft and witches, is not only for fear of using magic to deceive others, but because the magic is detrimental to the social and ethical standards and enters prohibited matters it is also damaging the divine teachings. As a result, it keeps humans away from his nature that seeks God.

Conclusion

Magic is a known element in religions that is the product of human thought when faced with disaster. Many beliefs that exist in the actions of people of old times, have magical roots, that are formed based on the wishes and fantasies. In fact, the origin of these beliefs and rituals are people who reflect their ideals and aspirations based on cultural beliefs and rituals. And many of these beliefs emerge as a lived experience and reach so much efficiencies that they become eternal. In fact, primitive man knows nature, or the wizards who were known as gods of nature as the highest active power and shared the power of gods with them and moved towards magic. But when the man was in path of evolution of technology and religion and the stage of practical knowledge and belief in a single force, he found the principles and rules governing the nature and he utilized the principles to find his way of life and as a result he bowed before nature, not with help of demagogue powers, but based on science and the law and based on the belief in a complete and perfect cause.

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