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ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY IN GREEK LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MUHAMMAD^S(SAW) ASCENT(AL-MI'RAJ) AND DANTE'S 'DIVINE COMEDY'

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ABSTRACT

The article endeavors to compare the event of "Al-Mi'raj" in Islam and the "Divine Comedy" in Greek literature. During Al-Mi'raj, the Holy Prophet surveyed a variety of sinners and also witnessed their punishments. He also met different Prophets at various levels of the sky. In the same way, in Divine Comedy the Pilgrim also visited different sinners and their punishments. The purpose of the study is that how Dante Alighieri is influenced by the event of Al-Mi'raj to write his poem the "Divine Comedy". The study is qualitative in nature and Susan Bassnet theory of comparison is used to explore it. The study aims to find out the basic similarities between Prophet's Al-Mi'raj and Divine Comedy and how this epic has affected the Christians. Moreover, the paper will disillusion the readers that Dante is influenced by the event of Al-Mir'aj in Islam in writing his poem as most of the Christians are ignorant about the teachings of Islam and so of the fact.

INTRODUCTION

" Comparative literature ", includes the investigation of writings across societies, it is interdisciplinary. We set specific boundaries to know which text is interesting. Susan Bassnett says that a large portion of individuals don't begin with the similar writing yet they end up with it here and there or other. By and large, first we begin perusing the content and afterward we show up at a correlation. At the point when we go over another content, by perusing that text we generally attempt to relate or contrast it with another content. We contrast the two writings' thoughts with one another.

According to the Islamic calendar, the event of Al- Mi'raj has taken place on the 27th day of the month of Rajab before the migration of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (S.A.W) in the 11th year of the Prophethood. This event is described briefly in chapter seventeen of the Holy Quran, which is named after the prophet's ascension to heaven. In this chapter Allah Al-Mighty says;

“Glory to Him Who carried His beloved by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose precincts We have blessed, to show him of Our wonders! He it is Who is All-Hearing, All-Seeing!” (Isra, 17)

Al- Mi'raj means Ascension that refers to the miraculous journey of the holy Prophet to the heavens. During this journey, the Divine Power moved his body and soul from the holy city of Mecca to Al-Aqsa and then to the heavens. Allah, with His grace, told Gabriel (AS), "today I am inviting my Beloved. Ask the yeomen of Heaven to make the Heaven bonny and Hoorain should wear pretty dress". On that night, Gabriel took a Buraq (a creature that travels with the speed of light and would carry the Prophet) on Almighty's call. On reaching heavens the Prophet has visited the seven levels of heaven. At each level, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has met other prophets, such as Prophet Adam (AS), Prophet Abraham(AS), Prophet Suleman (AS), Prophet Noah (AS), Prophet Moses (AS), Prophet Jesus (AS), Prophet Idrees (AS), Prophet Dawood (AS), etc.

The Divine Comedy is an epic poem by Dante (1265-1321 AD). This poem is comprised of fourteen thousand and two hundred thirty-three (14,233) lines, which are divided into three sections: Inferno (Hell), Purgatorio (Purgatory) and Paradiso (Paradise). As Dante explained later, nearly every line in the Comedy could be interpreted in multiple ways, could be theological, philosophical or autobiographical. The work was undertaken, not for speculations but for practical end. Dante wrote this epic to remove those who are living in this life in the state of misery, and lead them to the state of felicity. The Comedy was also the story of Dante's own death by banishment and enlightenment, when Dante and other White Florentines were exiled from Florence in 1301 by Black Guelphs. This epic is a type of Dante's personal attack on Pope Boniface and his other enemies. In this epic poem, Dante's altered ego, the pilgrim, travels through the Hell and Purgatory to reach Paradise. His journey is meant to impress upon the readers the consequences of sins and glories of Heaven. Dante is both the author and the central figure of this travelogue. He travels Hell, Purgatory and Heaven to make his way back to God, meeting several characters from history and literature on his way. We can see many sinners in the Hell, belonging to Florence.

Research Problem

The Islamic concept of Al-Mi'raj is edited and misrepresented for a political purpose by Dante Alighieri without letting his readers to know the real fact of imitating the event of Al-Mi'raj in Islam. The article unravels the problem to clarify all the misconceptions about Islamic ideology.

Research Questions

Is Dante really influenced by the event of Al-Mi'raj in Islamic Ideology in writing his epic poem "Divine Comedy"?

What is the basic similitude between the event of Al- Mi'raj and "Divine Comedy" by Dante?

Research Objectives

This research aims:

To know either Dante is influenced by the event of Al-Mi'raj in Islam or not.

To find out that "Divine Comedy" is just the edited copy of the event of Al-Mi'raj.

Research Significance

The research is significantly significant in the sense that it explores the event of Al-Mi'raj and Dante's Divine Comedy for semblance. The paper unearths the fact that Dante has really been influenced from and studied Arabic literature. Dante has just tried to give a symbolic piece of writing to his countrymen. The paper also disillusioned that Dante has misrepresented Islamic ideology and edited it for his own purpose. The paper would help the readers of Divine comedy to analyze it in comparison with the event of Al-Mi'raj. The readers of the poem would also come to know that how Dante was fierce towards his opponent Florentine

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shamal Abu-Baker Husain (2016), in his Dante's "The Divine Comedy", Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Muhammed's Isra and Miraj A Comparative Study" analyzes any conceivable impact of the Isra and Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad on Dante's "The Divine Comedy", and thus, Dante's effect on Eliot's "Prufrock". Maybe when he was composing his epic, Dante was not content with the prevalence of Islam and its effect on the medieval times' European culture.

Dante has been predisposed by the interpretation of the Arabic accounts of Muhammad's Ascension to paradise by St. Bonaventura da Siena (Italian middle age educational scholar and philosopher), which was uncovered in Miguel Asin Palacoi's book La Eschatologia Muslumana La Divina Commedia that shocked Dante's researchers in 1919, when he expressed that Dante acquired the main thoughts of his epic from the Islamic event of Mi'raj. This article portrays that Dante took some materials from the Islamic event of Muhammad's Isra and Mi'raj and it made base to his extraordinary epic 'Divine Comedy'.

Jesper Hede (2008), in his "Jews and Muslims in Dante's Vision", features, Dante's demeanor towards Jews and Muslims in The Divine Comedy which had been a dubious issue in literary investigations of the ancient period. This

article contends that the treatment of the issue has regularly been deceiving because of under statements and exaggeration. Jesper accepts that Dante considered himself to be a traditional Christian, to view other religious, social or ethnic populations both inside and outside his own middle age Europe, especially Jews and Muslims.

He accepted that religion, culture and nationality are present day markers which don't effortlessly apply to Dante's perspective. Dante had faith in the solidarity of humankind as plummeted from Adam and Eve. He implies that, the three societies of middle age Europe were Islam, Christianity and Judaism however they were different variations of one culture. One of these was right by divinity and fate. The rest of the two were in the wrong, in the light of human unawareness and some unacceptable utilization of free will. In the nineteenth century it was recommended that Dante had a close companion in the Jewish writer Immanuel ben Solomon of Rome (called Manello Giudeo) who exchanged sonnets with Dante's artist companion Cino da Pistoia. After Dante's demise, Immanuel wrote in Hebrew an impersonation of the Divine Comedy called Tophet and Eden, which contains a revelation of Hell and Heaven. In any case, from the get-go in the twentieth century the proposal of a link of fellowship among Dante and Immanuel was discharged because of the absence of proof. Essentially, Immanuel was a talented artist and knew about Dante's wonderful vision of Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. There is no proof that, on an individual level, Dante was especially worried about the Jewish people group. In the epic Dante doesn't criticize Muslims or Jews for the overall issue of Christianity.

Bilquees Dar (2013), in "Impact of Islam on Dante's Divine Comedy", features that Dante composed the extraordinary epic Divine Comedy to compose something incredible parallel with legendary Isra and Mi'raj as he composed Divine Comedy subsequent to having perused interpretations of the Arabic accounts of Mi'raj Nama by Bonaventura da Siena. As per Professor Miguel Asin Palacois, a Spanish researcher and a Catholic minister whose work *La Eschatologia Musulmana La Divina Comedia* in 1919, demonstrated that Dante acquired the focal thoughts of his *Commedia* from Islamic event of Al-Isra and Al-Mi'raj, which stuns Dante's researchers. Palacois based his debate mainly thirteenth century Sufi thinker Abn Arabi whose *Futuhati Makkiyah* bears similarity to thoughts and subjects communicated in Divine Comedy. Palacois draws equality between early Islamic way of thinking and the Divine Comedy and contends that Dante infers numerous features and scenes about the hereafter straightforwardly or in a roundabout way from the spiritual compositions of Abn-Arabi, Al-Ma'arri (Arab ancient artist) and obviously from the Isra and Mi'raj. Palacois saw significant similitudes at an emblematic and formal level as Divine Comedy depicts Dante's excursion in the domains of life after death and speaks of the soul's excursion towards God and Isra or Mi'raj portray the night excursion of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) during a solitary night around the year 621 AD.

Maria Esposito Frank (2007), "Dante's Muhammad: Parallels between Islam and Arianism", she tackles various issues associated with Dante's Muhammad, for example, the question previously raised by Miguel Asin Palacios of

Muslim sources (the Mi'raj material in hadith) as motivations or models for the *Commedia* or the importance of the Islamic figures Dante experiences in his excursion. Maria explored Dante's own understanding of the Prophet of Islam as encountered in *Inferno* 28th as a historical figure and religious leader. Dante placed Muhammad (S.A.W) in his imaginary eighth circle of Hell and the *conterpasso* (Latin term which means punishment of souls in Dante's *Inferno*) assigned to him did not fulfill the views of Islam and it is something anti-Islamic approach towards our beloved Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Indeed, anti-Muslims sentiments, which led to mis-representation of Islam's teachings and its believers. In short, lack of information about Islamic ideology and ignorance of authentic Islamic sources led to miss-understanding of Dante to represent Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and Islamic ideology in such a manner which is not only unacceptable to Muslims but to the non-Muslim scholars of the world too.

Steven j. McMichael (2011), investigates in his article " The Night Journey (al-isra) and Ascent (al-mi'raj) of Muhammad in medieval Muslims and Christian perspective" which was published in journal *Islam and Christian-Muslim relations*. We know the Ascent of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was a significant event in his life that set up him as a significant prophet who not only met with major prophets of the past but also shown up at the very Throne of Almighty. That is the reason he is called as Imam-ulAnbia. The entire substance of this article shows that how medieval Christians, particularly those of fifteenth century (Alonso de Espina, Pope Pius II and Roberto de Lecce), saw this account in the light of Christian teachings. These Christian writers realized that Ascension in the life of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) gave him religious greatness and religious power and in this manner, they attempted to dishonor him in their dubious works. Moreover, their polemical assault was not just about the distinctions of Muslims' and Christians' vision of Paradise, yet in addition about Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his central goal, the vision of God, other fundamental philosophical convictions, and the part of spirituality, particularly supplications in religion.

Joshua Matthews (2013), calls attention to in his article, "The divine comedy as an American Civil War. This article contends that nineteenth-century Americans defined Dante's *Divine Comedy* regarding public and transnational talk of federalism and republican patriotism, which acquainted Dante with the United states and lift the ubiquity and dissemination of his works there.

DATA ANALYSIS

Al-Mi'raj

The event of Al-Mi'raj is of paramount importance in Islam. Almighty Allah honored his beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with this event. Allah (SWT) sent Gabriel (AS) along with Raphael (AS) and Michael (AS) to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Prophet (SAW) was napping at his cousin, Ume Hania's (RA) house. He was half asleep, when suddenly the rope was torn and Gabriel (AS) came in along with other angels. The angles carried the Prophet to Masjid ul Haram.

In Masjid ul Haram, Prophet (SAW) rested for a while in Hateem (part of Bait Ullah). The angels did not speak to him until they first took him and placed him by the well of Zamzam. Gabriel opened the chest of Prophet Muhammad, removed his holy heart and washed it with the water of Zamzam until it was clean. Then he brought a gold basin in which there was the dressing of faith and wisdom. He put on all the faith and wisdom and then his chest was sewed. (call Shaq e Sader). All the instruments for this surgery were brought from Heaven except water. Each and everything was placed on its own place and many elements of Noor and Wisdom have been planted in the holy heart. The sign of Naboth was also stamped on His back between his shoulders. On that night Almighty asked Gabriel (AS) to take a Buraq (a creature that travels with the speed of light that would carry Prophet Muhammad) (SAW). Gabriel (AS) brought the Buraq from the Heaven and presented it to the Prophet. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) rode on it. The Prophet (SAW) and Gabriel (AS) sat on Buraq in tandem, the prophet was sitting in front. In this way the journey of the earth was started and it is called Isra, a night journey from Masjid ul Haram to Masjid ul Aqsa (From Mecca to Jerusalem) and from thence to the Heavens. The Holy Prophet observed various kinds of people who were rewarded/punished for their worldly deeds. Following is the brief detail of such kind of people.

Rewards of Jihad

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) along with Gabriel (AS) passed on a strange nation. They were performing a strange type of farming. In one day the farm was ploughed, seeds were sowed, ripened and then cultivated. Prophet (SAW) asked Gabriel (AS) who these people are. Gabriel (AS) told the Prophet that these people offer their lives and money in the way of Almighty. Almighty gives promotions to their rewards and integrities. The same is the case with their good deeds, they are increasing by many times. Gabriel (AS) told the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that these are the people who fight (do jihad) in the way of Almighty. Their goodness increases more than seven hundred times. And whatever they spend in Almighty's way they are rewarded. And He is the best provider. (Serat e Rasool (SAW)).

Those Who Leave Salah (tark e Salah)

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw some people who were in intense trouble. They were lying upside down on the ground. Their heads were being bruised by striking against huge stones. Their heads regained its own form again and the huge stone struck them again. This process repeated again and again. Prophet (SAW) inquired about them. Gabriel (AS) told the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that those were the people who rested in the time of salah and do not offer it and delay salah.

Those who Deny Zakat

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had seen another terrible situation. He saw some people who are naked and had some old and torn up clothes upon their private

parts. They were grazing like camels and bulls. They were eating pus of the sinners of Hell, stones, thorny plants and Zaqqum. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has inquired about them from Gabriel (AS), who said that those were the people who do not pay zakat from their resources. They eat zakat themselves, so they are being punished.

Those who Fornicate (Adultery)

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) passed on another nation. They had two pots of meat. One had fresh and tasty meat, while another had rotten and bad smelled meat. These people used to eat the rotten meat while leaving the good, fresh and tasty one. Prophet asked from Gabriel (AS) who these people were? These were the people who used to leave their own wives and go for the forbidden ones (go for unlawful sexual intercourse). After a few steps, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw a huge terrible ditch of fire (like a well full of fire). There were naked people (men and women) who were raised up with the flames and descended back in the ditch with the flames. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) enquired about these people. Gabriel (AS) told that those were the previous fornicates.

The Usurers

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw another sect of people who had transparent abdomens and had huge scorpions and snakes in it. They could neither stand nor walk due to its weight. After a while, a terrible horse came out, walked on their abdomens and crushed them, while the sinners were whining. Prophet enquired about them. Gabriel (AS) told him that those were the people who used to lend money on interest.

Those who had Illegitimate Children

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw a crew of women lying upside-down on the ground and were being whipped. Prophet enquired about them. Gabriel (AS) replied that those were the women who had illegitimate children and then they had been killed by their mothers.

Consequences of backbiting

Afterwards, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw some people around a man. They were cutting flesh from their bodies and gave to the man to eat it. According to Hazrat Anas (RA), their nails were made of copper and they were scratching their faces and chests (Serat e Rasool). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) enquired about them and Gabriel (AS) told him that those were the backbiters of His Ummah.

Punishment of Drinking Wine

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw another people whose faces are black and eyes were blue. Their lips were on the ground while the upper one lip were on their heads and blood were gushing out and made the ground filthy. Prophet

Muhammad (SAW) queried about them. Gabriel (AS) told him these are the drunken.

Those who Gives False Witness

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw another crowd of people who had mouths like pigs and their tongues were on their backs. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) enquired about them. Gabriel (AS) told him that those were the people of his Ummah who made false witness in the court (or in front of a Qazi) just for the sake of money.

Those who are Disobedient to Parents

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw another group of people who were being burnt in the fire. They used to die and then again become alive. On Prophet's request, Gabriel (AS) told him that those were the people who disobeyed their parents.

Heaven's Observation

Almighty Allah (SWT) encouraged the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to observe Heaven and Hell as well. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) entered into Heaven. The Holy Quran elaborates it in Surah Najim, V-14.

The main gate's width of the Heaven is long enough that a rider cannot finish it in forty years of traveling. On the main gate, Prophet (SAW) saw some descriptions that says "the rewards of charity and zakat is ten times while if you lend money to someone its rewards are eighteen times" (Waqeya Mir'aj by Mufti Abdullah Sha- YouTube). The wall of heaven is made of Gold. The land of Heaven is made of pure and special fragrant. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw a doom like structure from which four holy rivers (of milk, honey, water and pure wine) were gushing out. (Sahih Muslim, Serat e Mustafa, Waqeya Mir'aj by Mufti Abdullah Sha- YouTube). Prophet (SAW) saw a beautiful palace and asked who's this palace was. Gabriel (AS) replied, O' beloved of Almighty, this palace belonged to the one who helped blind people on the way. Prophet (SAW) saw another great beautiful palace in which a Hoor was washing her face. Prophet (SAW) wanted to enter into the palace but got back on his holy steps. He said, "when I reminded Umar's (RA) dignity and haya, I did not enter. (because it was the palace of Umar).

Afterwards, the Prophet (SAW) saw a group of hoors who were so blessed with shining. The Prophet (SAW) prayed for them and said may they be blessed more for his ummah. One of them stood and asked Prophet Muhammad (SAW), to whom he would give her on the day of Judgment. The Prophet (SAW) replied that he would give her to Bilal (RA). All of the hoors laughed and said that she would be given to an Abyssinian. The Prophet (SAW) replied that on the day of judgment his face would be blessed with noor and all of his blackness would come to all the faces of hoors and would make mole on their foreheads and it would increase their beauty.

Towards the Hell

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) then came towards the Hell. He saw several types of punishments for the sinners/pagans. Prophet (SAW) saw huge serpents, scorpions of the size of horses and mules in the abdomen of pagans. Then, Prophet (SAW) saw a huge machine (machine) like hills. Gabriel (AS) told him, on this machine pagans will be crushed.

Divine Comedy

The Divine Comedy is an Italian epic poem by Dante Alighieri. He started to write this poem in 1308 and completed it in 1320, one year before his death. It is widely considered to be pre-eminent work in Italian literature and one of the greatest works of the world literature. Dante wrote this poem when he was banished from his homeland, Florence in 1302, accused of corruption. The political conflict was there on the peak at Dante's time. He belonged to White Guelphs and their opponents were Black Guelphs. Blacks took hold of the city with the help of Pope Boniface IV and Charles of Voiles, brother of Roman King Philip IV. They kicked out White Guelphs and Dante was banished for two years and had to pay five thousand florins. He did not pay the fine, as he believed he was innocent. However, Dante reacted in harsher manner by writing Divine Comedy. He presented most of his enemies in 'Inferno' and taught them a good lesson.

There are three sections of the: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso.

Inferno

Inferno begins in the dark wood, where Dante has found himself almost in the middle of his life's journey. Dante did not tell how he entered into the forest. He believed that when he abandoned the true way of life, he lost himself. The forest was too dark and impenetrable and less bitter than death (Inferno- Canto 1). Dante was encountered by three wild animals that represented Florence city indirectly. First, he saw leopard which represented Florence city and worldly pleasure (lust/envy). Then he saw a lion which represented the Royal House of France, ambition and pride. In the last, he was encountered by she-wolf that represented papacy and avarice. However, Dante was saved by a divine being, Virgil whose body's brightness was enough for him walk. Virgil told him his mission and told why he rescued him? Virgil was sent by Beatrice, Dante's beloved who was sitting in the heaven with Rachel and got news from Mary through St. Lucy.

Under the guidance of Virgil, Dante has spent three days in Inferno and in these three days he visited various circles of the 'Inferno'. Each circle contains different sinners and their punishments.

The Gate of Hell

Dante saw some description written on the entrance of the Hell.

Through me the way to the Infernal City.

Through me the way to Eternal sadness.

Through me the way to the lost People.

Justice moved my Supreme Maker.

I was shaped by Divine Power.

By highest Wisdom, and by Primal Love.

Before me nothing was created.

That is not internal, And Eternal I endure.

Forsake all hope, All you that enter here.

(Divine Comedy translated by A.S Kline, P-23).

When Dante entered into the Hell, he heard sighs, complaints, deep groans, many tongues, terrible crying, accents of anger, words of sadness, voices deep and hoarse. Dante tells, it made me wept first. Dante enquired about them. Virgil told him that they were neither rebellious nor faithful to God. They were faithful towards themselves only i.e. they were selfish. They were envious to each other. Dante saw Celestine V (a pope) in this crew for his cowardice (who refused to be a pope). These wretches were naked and goaded viciously by hornets and wasps. Their faces were streamed with tears mixed with blood that was collected at their feet by loathsome worms. Dante found Charon, who carries dead souls over the Acheron river to Hades. He shouted to Dante;

Woe unto you, ye soul deprived.

Hope never come to look upon the Heaven.

I come to lend you to the other shore.

To the eternal shades in heat and frost (Inferno, C-33).

First Circle: Limbo (Heathens)

Dante was awakened by a heavy thunder that shattered his deep sleep. Dante found himself in the first circle of the Hell. Dante heard no sound except sighs, complaints which were coming from the crowds of women, children and men. Virgil told him that those people had not committed any sins, yet they were in the Hell. Virgil explained that being good was not enough for them as they were not baptized and baptism was the gate way to faith.

The Second Circle: Minos the Carnal Sinner

Dante found a demon in the second circle called Minos. Minos was one of the three judges of the Infernal region. He punishes the sinners in the Hell. He examines the sins of sinners and every sinner confesses his sins in front of Minos who sends him down in the Hell through his tail. In this circle, Dante found those sinners who committed sexual intercourse unlawfully or prefer lust to reason. He found that the sinners were caught by hellish storm striking them with each other and carrying them here and there.

The Third Circle: The Gluttonous

Dante descended down to third circle where gluttonous were being punished. Dante describes the physical environment of this circle as heavy and cold rain, large hail, tainted water and sleet. In addition, Dante found a demon Cerberus. It was a three headed dog, crimson eyes, had a foul and black beard, and had a vast belly. He had poisonous foam in his mouth. He was the guard at the entrance to Hades. When it barks on spirits, they wish to be deaf (Inferno, C-4). Dante found his Florentine contemporary Ciaccio (well known for his gluttony).

The Fourth Circle: Plutus: The Avaricious

In this circle Dante found another demon Plutus, who is the ruler of the underworld. Dante says that he found more people here than elsewhere. It means that that most of the people in the world are avaricious. The sinners had weighty stones that were used as weapons to push each other with, which symbolize selfish drive for future during their life time. Dante also encountered Popes, Cardinals and Priests in this circle. Virgil told him that they would go butting each other till eternity.

The Fifth Circle: The Styx and Wrathful

Styx is one of the underworld rivers through which Charon crosses the ferry souls of the dead. The water of this marshy river is dark. Dante saw spirits were naked in this fen and all looked angry. They were striking each other, not only with hands, but heads, chest, feet and were mingling each other with their teeth, bite by bite. They were swallowing its filth. These were the bad tempered people of the world.

The Sixth Circle: Dis: The Heretics

When Dante and Virgil descended down to the Sixth Circle of the Hell, they found massive number of tombs. Flames were scattered among the tombs. Their lids were open and very fierce groans were coming out of these tombs. Indeed, they seem to be sad and wounded (Inferno, C-9). When Dante enquired, Virgil told him that those were arch-heretics. Dante also saw Epicureans, those who deny the immortality of souls. Virgil told him thousands of the Epicureans were lying in each tomb.

The Seventh Circle

When Dante and Virgil descended down in the Seventh Circle. They found a demon who was half man and half bull called Minotaur (guard at the 7th Circle). This circle is for those who commit violence. The sinner's souls are being boiled. In addition, the Seventh Circle is divided into three rings. In the second ring, there were those people who did violence to oneself. It contained prodigals, gamblers, wept in moments of laugh. While, in the third ring there were those who did violence against nature, spoke bad things about deity and scorned Nature and her gifts.

The Eighth Circle: Malebolge: Simple Fraud

Dante came to a place in the Hell called Malebolge. Its colour was like iron and was made up of stones. The Eighth Circle was further divided into ten moats called chasms. In all these chasms there were only fraudulents. The sinners of each level were being punished differently. They were the hypocrites, thieves, deceivers, corrupt popes, sellers of public offices, sellers of sacred things, seducers, etc.

The Ninth Circle: The Frozen River Cocytus

When Dante entered into this circle he heard a voice that said; "take care when you pass". Dante saw a lake under his feet. It was frozen river. The sinners in this river were chattering and croaking like frogs. Then Dante came to a place, where there were those sinners who had killed their brothers for money like Cain. (Son of Adam who killed his brother Abel).

Purgatorio

Both Dante and Virgil came out of the Hell through Satan's body and went towards southern hemisphere. They found a mountain in front of them and climbed over it. Purgatory is a place of purification for the sinners who had been blessed for Heaven. They found two categories of people in Purgatory; the ex-communicated and the late-repentant. The late-repentant were those people who repented in the last part of their life or delayed their repentance. It also contained those kings who were not interested in their subjects. On other hand, the ex-communicated people were those who were excluded from church in their life time and were not allowed to participate in any ceremony of the church. Dante has mentioned the names of both types of people. Belacqua, Jocopo, Tolomi and Sordello were among the late-repentants. In the Purgatory, Dante claimed that the leadership of Florence city is in the hands of helmsman. Sordello showed them the way to climb up on the mountain because most of its surface was hard to climb. There is a difference between the sinners of Inferno and Purgatory.

The spirits of purgatory committed seven sins (pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, anxiety, gluttony and lust). These sinners repented in their life and their souls were being purified here and prepared for Paradise. On the other hand, the sinners of Inferno (Hell) would be punished till the Day of

Judgment. They would be here forever (Purgatorio). An angel was sitting in front of the gate of Purgatory on the top steep of various colours and had a blade in his hand. The angel was St. Peter (Purgatorio,C-IX). The Angel marked seven 'P' letters on his forehead through his blade. The angel told Dante that as he entered in to the terraces of the purgatory, one mark would be vanished. The seven terraces represented seven deadly sins.

Paradiso

In the starting lines of Paradiso, Dante invokes Greek god, Apollo to bless him with the strength to complete his poem. It is noon time, Dante and his beloved, Beatrice are standing on the top of a mount in Purgatory. Beatrice turns her eyes towards the sun and both of them begin to rise in the sky. Dante was surprised as he could not notice how they flew and found themselves over the sun. Beatrice told him that human souls had a tendency to rise towards God. Hence, Dante was purified from his sins in Purgatory. Dante says that he rose up because of Beatrice's love (Paradiso, C-I).

Dante describes paradise as is consisted of nine spheres from the earthly paradise or Garden of Eden (book of Genesis). Both Dante and his beloved Beatrice were rising up towards the nine spheres of paradise when at last they arrived at the Empyrean, the highest level of Paradise where Dante claims that he saw the image of God.

CONCLUSION

A comparative study has been made of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) Al Mir'aj (ascension) and Dante's the Divine Comedy. When Dante was exiled, he offered a severe treatment to his countrymen by writing this epic poem. Dante published many works, one of them was De Monarchia, a Latin treatise, written between 13012 and 1313. He intervened one of the most controversial subjects of his days; the relationship between religious authority (represented by Pope) and secular authority (represented by Roman Empire). However, he criticized them in his various works but the Divine Comedy's treatment was more severe. Dante mostly criticized those people who were opposite to him in his political and social affairs. Dante also talked about different prophecies in the Comedy like of Ciaccio, Farinata, Brunetto, Vanni Fucci and Cacciaguida (Dante's great grand-dad). This Comedy is all about politics and church and should have been titled as "Political Comedy". Dante studied Islamic ideology about Al-Miraj. Miguel Asin Palacios (Spanish Scholar) argues in his book "La Escatologia musulmana la Divina Commedia", Muslims sources and motifs are present in Dante's Comedy. He also drew a parallel between early Islamic philosophy and the Divine Comedy and argued that Dante derives many features and episodes about the hereafter directly or indirectly from the spiritual writing of Abn-Arabi, Al-Ma'arri (Arab classical poet) and of course from the Isra and Mi'raj. Therefore, we see that how he was influenced from Islamic concepts. Apart from Al-Mir'aj, he also made some references to Virgil's Aeneid, Ovid's Metamorphoses and Brunetto's Tesoretto, which have the same meter (terza rima) as the opening scene of the comedy. The paper has found out many similarities and differences between the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) ascension and Divine Comedy. In Al-

Mir'aj, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was guided by Gabriel (AS). The holy journey was started in the night (isra). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw some punishments of the sinners (as an example shown to him). All the time Gabriel (AS) updated him about the sinner's punishment and their sins for such torment. Prophet ascended towards the sky through buraq. He also ascended each level of the skies and met the previous prophets. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) ascended Empyrean too, and talked to the Almighty Allah (SWT) with His grace. Then, he observed Heavens and Hell. In Al-Mir'aj, Gabriel (AS) stopped at Sidratal-Muntaha, and refused to go further with him.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) saw four rivers were gushing out of the Sider tree. On other hand, Dante's journey was started in the dark wood. He has also a guide, Virgil. He descended down to Hell, and saw different types of torments. Likewise, in Al-Mir'aj, he enquired about the sinners and their sins. Dante mentioned such types of sins which were also mentioned by Islamic ideology and its punishment. Dante also saw some description upon the Hell's gate. Dante used the concept of purification of soul in river Lethe (a Biblical source).

Virgil stopped at mount Purgatory and refused to go further. He went to paradise too and believed that he saw God who appeared to him in the form of trinity. In the comedy, four rivers are also mentioned. Moreover, the paper has also highlighted some differences. Dante's Purgatory is different from Al-Mir'aj as it is taken from Old Testament. In the journey, Dante has been threatened by wretched spirits, fallen angels and demons in the hell. He was betrayed by demon Malacoda by showing him a wrong way. Here, time is not absolute and the whole Comedy took one week, while in Al-Mir'aj the time was absolute.

Dante's paradise is also different and gave names of solar planets to each level of the heaven as unlike Al- Mi'raj. In the last chapters of the Comedy, we observe Dante's tiredness in terms plot, characters and dialogues while we don't feel any such thing on the part of the Holy Prophet in the event of Al-Mi'raj.

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