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## **The Eye of Insight and Spiritual Tourism in Islamic Mysticism and Eastern Philosophy**

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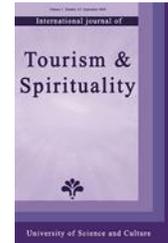
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### **Abstract**

Religious tourism is a kind of tourism that nowadays is defined by the elements of the spiritual motivation of the tourists rather than the destination of this tourism. This paper aims to introduce The Eye of Insight Islamic mysticism and Third Eye in the philosophy of the East and to investigate the importance of opening these eyes in creating the sense of spirituality for the tourists. Results showed that both in Islamic mysticism and in the philosophy of the East, human perfection has been depicted as a journey from material world to the world of meaning. In this regard, seekers are recommended to open eyes of their hearts in order to contemplate on nature and explore the meaning hidden in it. Relying on such an approach helps the tourists correct their attitudes toward nature based on this ideology and is effective in the individual and ethical perfection of the tourists. It has also abundant effects in collective and global scale since it can prevent the negative effects of the view that considers nature as a means for enjoyment and consumption which is frequently seen in mass tourism. This approach is also useful in sustainable tourism and protection of natural resources.

**Keywords:** Religious Tourism, Spiritual Tourism, The Eye of Insight, Third Eye, Islamic Mysticism, Philosophy of the East

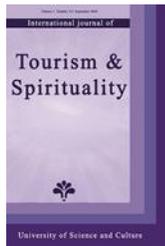


## **Introduction**

In the scripture of Islam, the Holy Quran, traveling through the earth and seeing the natural manifestations and cultural relics of the past generations have been recommended. Moreover, people are advised to open their eyes of insight when facing these phenomena and reflect on them relying on their intellect. This doctrine of the Holy Quran in Islamic mysticism is the basis of the discourses that consider The Eye of Insight and material eye together. Moreover, there are a high number of verses in mystical literature that constantly emphasize that one should not only consider the appearance of the universe and its beauties, but he must also know that there is an inherent truth in all phenomena that is the Essence of God and this aspect of the world should be taken into consideration by those who seek God. Besides, the ontology of the Islamic mysticism is reflected in the philosophy of the East, where all natural phenomena are considered as the manifestations of impersonal nature of God the Exalted. Therefore, human beings are recommended to correct their knowledge of the world in order to achieve salvation and happiness, and rather than considering the world as an independent existence, they must seek to explore the Brahman inherent in all creatures. This ontological approach has led to discussions on the third eye in eastern philosophy and particularly in Hinduism and Buddhism. Although all human beings have the third eyes, seekers must open it and view the world with no illusion or Maya. This article first deals with the concept of religious tourism and conceptual evolution and then investigates the effect of opening The Eye of Insight and third eye when facing the natural phenomena in the field of tourism relying on the ontology of the Islamic mysticism and two eastern religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism.

## **Tourism and spirituality**

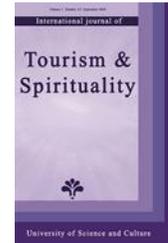
Tourism is defined as a journey through which people move to a destination and come back home; it also means the traveling for entertainment (Alvani, 1994: 18). Nevertheless, this definition is seriously challenged and criticized and it is not accepted for those hedonist tourists who travel for leisure and entertainment (Timothy and



Olsen, 2013: 20). However, terminologically, tourism has been defined variously, leading to its complicated, multifaceted, and multidisciplinary nature (Kazemi, 2006: 20). The World Tourism Organization has provided a definition of this category that has been accepted by a high number of the international scientific and research centers and has been regarded as the basis of their policymaking. Tourism refers to ‘the journeys with spending at least one night in the destination and less than one year out of home’ (World Tourism Organization, 1983: 5). The above generalized definition has led to the fact that a variety of the journeys with different goals can be regarded as the types of tourism, including recreational, trade, cultural, religious, health, sports, adventurous, and naturalist tourism (World Tourism Organization, 1983: 22).

Religious tourism sometimes is briefly defined as ‘visiting the holy places such as shrines, monuments and so on by the tourists’ and is the same with pilgrimage in its religious meaning. However, nowadays, religious tourism is mostly defined with respect to the tourists' motivation and spiritual trade resulting from these journeys rather than tourists' destination. Therefore, religious tourism or pilgrimage is defined as a ‘journey toward the place where God's will and power have once emerged (Timothy and Olsen, 2013: 16). In fact, religious tourism mainly addresses the religious and mystical experiences that tourists gain in their destination; experiences that are not obtained even in totally sacred places; however, they may be gained for those tourists who have selected a destination except mosques, churches, and synagogues; therefore, they may be called religious tourists.

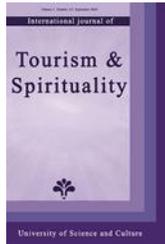
Hadman and Jackson discuss the visiting historical monuments of the United Kingdom and state that although these visits mainly are done to introduce the cultural heritage and architecture of these places, it has been frequently seen that tourists are affected by their religious feelings in such places. Iyad also believes that although pilgrims and tourists differ from each other, tourists may be affected by their religious feelings under similar conditions like the pilgrims. According to Di Sosa, tourists can unconsciously be changed into the pilgrims and vice versa (ibid).



Consequently, the first step that should be taken in religious tourism is to provide a definition of this type of tourism that goes beyond the religious places and indicates a journey that creates religious feelings. Strengthening the religious feeling is the common element of all pilgrims and religious tourists. In fact, they are looking for some kind of mystical, spiritual, and religious experience and expect to gain it. This experience is the transition from the modern world without spirituality and understanding the sacred world (ibid: 46).

Accepting the above definition provides a new concept of spirituality in tourism. In fact, spirituality in tourism should not be sought only in the religious holy places and places of worship and pilgrimage, but the mountain soaring, deep rainforests, coast landscape of the seas and oceans at sunset and other natural landscapes can provide pilgrims with spiritual experience and sacred encountering such that they deeply feel the presence of God in the world. Hence, as mentioned before, there are numerous phenomena in the world that can be considered as the destinations for religious tourism or, to be more precise, spiritual tourism. This claim has been accepted in the new era that any place of the world can be included in the sacred circle such as natural locations or human artifact, like the pyramids, mountains, and woodlands (ibid: 51).

Although considering the religious tourism in this direction may be viewed far-reaching and ambitious, having such an attitude toward nature and its spiritual capacities have motivated many tourists in the modern era. As stated before, a significant number of journeys of followers of the New Age during the year mostly occur for the self-contemplation, maintaining spirituality, and reducing the materialism (ibid: 151). Undoubtedly, paying attention to this original need of the tourists may underlie decision-making about the kind of tourism that does not include only the tourists' fleeting natural needs, but also takes into account the effects of this phenomenon in a broader scope. A number of researchers have referred to this requirement: 'Most researchers and scholars, regardless of the consequences of the journey on the ideology and direction of one's life, call him *tourism* merely due



to moving away from his home. This viewpoint on tourism is likely based on the positivist empiricism in social sciences and does not view the tourist as a perfect human with all his needs, interests and desires' (ibid: 72).

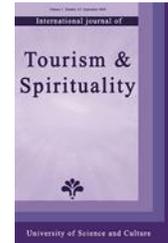
### **The world and hierarchy of existence**

Before addressing the main idea of this paper that is to classify the potentials of Islamic mysticism and philosophy in considering the spirituality in tourism, the ontology of these two schools need to be discussed and the design that these schools have presented on systematic arrangement and hierarchy of existence should be introduced. In this regard, it has to be noted that departure from materialism to the spiritualism that may be known as the basic definition of the spiritual journey necessities understanding the universe and its different areas. Considering the life and the truth behind the phenomena is one of the oldest and most entrenched cognition and orientation of human beings. Accordingly, some anthropologists such as Taylor believe that religions originate from animism (Pulse, 206: 39-45). The comprehensive idea of animism that can show the natural and intuitional human knowledge on the world, in both developed religions of monotheistic religions and East rites, has reached perfection. Moreover, the knowledge of the hierarchy of ontological system has been emphasized as the fixed doctrine in the ontology of these religions and the materialistic world has been regarded as a rank of intricate existence.

In Islamic mysticism, which owes the revelation training and prophetic religion, the universe has a long hierarchy that is a manifestation of the Unique Essence of God and has emerged to reveal the manifestation of His Essence (Yazdan Panah, 2010: 299). Hafiz states this truth in verse:

*When, into the mirror of the cup, the reflection of Thy face fell,  
From the laughter of wine, into the crude desire of the cup, the Aref  
fell.*

*With that splendor that in the mirror, the beauty of Thy face made,  
All this picture into the mirror of fancy fell.*

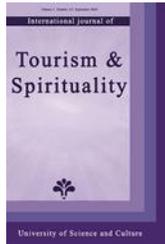


In the process of manifestation of God Essence, when it comes to self-determinations, first, the universe of the wisdom, then, spiritual world and eventually the material universe will emerge. The world we live in it whether heaven and earth, constitutes the material world and the last rank of the ranks of creation and final determination of the self-determinations (Amininezhad, 2013: 282). Accordingly, what is observed in this material world, all are manifestations of God Essence and all material phenomena intrinsically are meaningful and this meaning constitutes their truth. Mirfendereski states this truth in verse:

*The heaven with these fair and pleasant stars should be beautiful;  
It hath an aspect beneath, whatever there may be above.  
If this lower aspect should ascend the ladder of knowledge,  
It would indeed be at one with its original.*

In eastern Philosophy and particularly in Hinduism, the gradation of the universe is the dominant aspect of its cosmology. Although Hinduism and what today is known as Hinduism has undergone different eras and has moved from polytheism toward pantheism, in the classical period of evolutionary history of this religion and with the rise of philosophical schools such as *Vedanta* and *Puranas*, ontology and theology of this religion have become very similar to the ontology of Islamic mysticism and personality integration raised in Islamic mysticism has been thoroughly visualized in the works of great Hindu thinkers like Shankara and Ramanuja (see Mahmoodi, 2013).

In *Upanishad* that Vedanta School regards itself as its expositor, the world is the emergence of the impersonal truth called *Brahman* that has ranked the universe with its advent. In these texts, Brahman is the privileged principle of the world of objects, and as all rivers that originate from the ocean, flow into the ocean, all originate from Brahman and go back to Brahman (Shayegan, 2007: 105). Using the pure teachings of Upanishad and the achievements of important philosophical schools of India such as Vedanta and Senkei, another group of Hindu scriptures called the Puranas explained ontological ranks and their emergence of God. There is no essentially a distinction between the world and God in Purana cosmology and the universe is

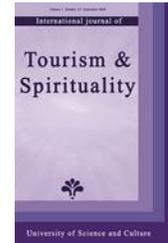


entirely the emergence of the ultimate truth and God Almighty. The fourth chapter of the first book of *Vishnu Purana* in praise of God states:

*Whatever is tangible and visible in the material world is your manifestation. Only ordinary people mistakenly think that this world is the natural world. The entire world is the world of knowledge. The worst error is considering it as an external object. Wise people know that the world originates from knowledge and is the manifestation of God; God who is the embodiment of pure knowledge (Wilson, 1840: 64).*

In Puranas, the universe is a set of seven intricate layers, like onion skins or coconut shells that surrounded each other. Water is the first layer of the universe, followed by the fire, air, *Akasha* (ether), *Bhotadi* (*Sattva*), *Mahat*, and *oyakata* (equilibrium of the triple types that is equivalent to *prakrti*) from outer layers. Therefore, with respect to the reductions of Brahman and since *Mahat* is the first creature, emergence and development of the universe must be contractile and spherical (Imani, 2010: 169).

Another form of universe gradation can be found in other eastern philosophies, namely Buddhism. Although the founder of Buddhism did not talk about the existence of God and, sometimes, even clearly denied God, his religion developed and in its evolution took precedence of its rival namely Hindu religion in terms of faith in unique, absolute, and eternal truth beyond the diversity of the material world and welcomed the philosophizing on different issues on the ontology and cosmology. Ontological ranks in Mahayana Buddhists can be investigated in three teaching categories of Buda (*Trikaya*). In Mahayana statement, three bodies (*kāyas*) and truths are considered for Buddha, including 1. *Nirmānakāya* or historical body of Buddha; 2. The *Sambhogakāya* or body of mutual enjoyment and 3. *Dharmakāya* or Truth body. According to the doctrine of *Trikaya*, the Buddha has an absolute and eternal truth that is visible in all beings and phenomena and all creatures are manifestations of this fact. The omniscient and omnipresent Hindu god have been replaced by this truth called *Dharma* body. The body of mutual enjoyment is then ranked that is the

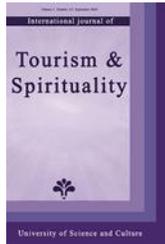


emergence of the truth of the Buddha in the form of spiritual beings or the *Bodhisattva* that live in heavens and supernatural places. Finally, historical body of Buddha is ranked that is manifested as historical Buddha or *Siddhartha Gotama* (Ashtiani, 1998: 354-358). Relying on this interpretation of the truth of Buddha, Mahayana tradition approaches the Hindu philosophy and, with no reference to God, considers the whole world and its phenomena as the manifestations of the absolute and eternal truth of the Buddha.

Consequently, as mentioned earlier, both Islamic mysticism and eastern philosophy believe that nature is full of secret and, like a mirror, reflects the constant and eternal truth behind itself. This constant truth is discovered in the process of manifestation and reveals natural world at the end of a long process. However, the results that can be obtained by this pure interpretation in both Islamic mysticism and eastern philosophy are of great importance and human development from Low levels to high levels and from the material world to the spiritual world are related to perfection and salvation of human beings; and can be regarded in the form of a spiritual journey.

### **Spiritual journey and the departure from of material world to the spiritual world**

Depicting the world as a hierarchy that begins with the plural changing and material world and moves toward unity, stability, and meaning has been viewed both in Islamic mysticism and eastern philosophy as a basis for explaining salvation of human beings and human perfection by departure from superficial layers of the material world to its inner layers. This trend is naturally rational and based on the knowledge and helps human beings to achieve a purer understanding of the universe and in this way promote their essence. In Islamic mysticism, the human journey toward truth and meaning is regarded as the quad journeys that the source and destination are the universes. Certainly, human beings after getting closer to God and returning to the world become celestial and reflect the presence of God and His companionship in all phenomena. The beginning of this spiritual journey is the material world and the journey from material



and natural world toward God; the second journey is to reflect on the names and attributes of Allah, or so-called a journey from the truth to the truth by truth; the third journey, a journey of the truth to creatures and despite the first journey where seeker is overwhelmed in the world of plurality; in this internal journey, seeker appeals to truth and rightfulness and the fourth journey is a departure from creatures to creatures by God.

During this journey, a mystic does his divine duties and communicates with people, directs and invites them to the prosperity and salvation

Theses quad journeys, sometimes dealt with in more details in mystical words, have been stated in Iranian mystical literature and mainly consider the movement toward the perfection and nearness to God as undergoing the stages and journeys. Using a beautiful allegory, Attar states the stages of this spiritual journey as passing the seven cities and the valleys:

*It's said that there are seven Valleys on our Path. Once we travel through all those seven Valleys, then we reach the cherished Convent of Love. The third Valley is the Valley of Mystical Knowledge. The fourth is the Valley of Total Detachment. The fifth is the Valley of Pure Illumination. The sixth is the Valley of Spiritual Astonishment. And the seventh is the Valley of Spiritual Poverty and Annihilation of Self into God. After the annihilation of the Self, there is no more journeying. You'll be absorbed entirely into Love. You'll become another pure drop in His vast Ocean of Unification.*

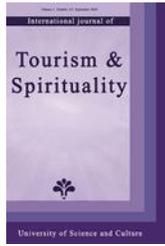
As a result of the four above-mentioned journeys, a mystic or seeker uses his entire constant being to remove all constraints and material aspects that have affected him and becomes celestial and attend in all individual stages of the universe, including intellectual world, the world of objects, and the material world. In this case, if the whole universe is nothing but his body, and as God is in all beings, he is present in all areas due to the light of God and views the entire universe and its creatures (Yazdanpanah, 628, 629). Hafiz -Pir Magian- describes this fact as follows:

*For years my heart was in search of the Grail  
What was inside me, it searched for, on the trail  
My quest to the Magi my path trace  
One glance solved the riddles that I Braille  
Found him wine in hand and happy face  
In the mirror of his cup would watch a hundred detail  
I asked, 'when did God give you this Holy Grail?'  
Said, 'on the day He hammered the world's first nail!'*

Human beings' departure from material world toward God is a spiritual journey that leads to the union of the seeker and the truth of the world. This union has been emphasized in Hindu texts, which constantly recommend attaining God to the seekers of the truth and the meaning hidden in the heart of the world.

In The *Bhagavad Gita*, as one of the most popular Hindu scriptures, following the *Upanishads* that introduces the unity of Atman and Brahman as the way to attain salvation and prosperity, the world is the manifestation of almighty *god (Krishna)* and human beings are recommended to put aside tangible forms and focus on the Krishna to attain the truth. Krishna states that 'everybody who attains this truth that I am the origin of elevated manifestation, seeks to unite with me by resistance in Yoga path'. The question is that how one should meditate and concentrate upon Krishna to unite with him. Krishna answers 'I am the origin of all creatures. Intellectual people who reflect on this, worship me.' This statement can be explained that since all creatures are the manifestation of almighty *god (Krishna)*, Krishna asks his lovers to empty their minds of all dependent creatures and phenomena and return to the constant truth and real existence of the world and unites with him (Swami Nirmalanada Giri, 2008: 188).

Salvation in Vedanta school is also attained by removing all the imaginations and by considering a distinct existence. This school believes that if human beings eliminate imaginary curtains and reject everything except Brahman, then the light of truth would shine in their hearts and prevail their existences and help them reach their destination. This school also views the world as the result of an illusion (*Maya*) that unites the reality and unreality. Reality originally is related

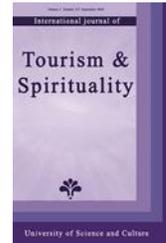


to Brahman and virtually belongs to the limitless multiplicity. Things reflect the reality but are not reality. As a result, the wisdom is to separate reality and non-reality and to reject all the constraints that confine reality and show it in plural forms by illuminative philosophy and certain knowledge (Shayegan, *ibid*, 2: 844-845).

In Buddhism, the idea of Maya and considering the mental phenomena as unrealistic is one of the teachings of the Buddha. According to Beck, a Buddhist scholar, 'in Buddhism, human beings suppose that the material world is the truth and this is an illusion or Maya. He can destroy this illusion internally only using the highest knowledge and information and make you feel that the interest in the material world is elusive.

To achieve this knowledge, a fascinated person after the complete remediation achieves the knowledge when focusing and attaining prosperity by overcoming his madness, material illusion or delusion, and interest in the world (Ashtiani, *ibid*: 307). In fact, according to the teachings of the Buddha, since the man considers the outside world as real, constant and eternal is interested in it. Hence, he makes his life filled with pain and dissatisfaction. In order to relieve himself, he should correct his vision toward the world and material phenomena, understand that everything in the world is mortal, and achieve the intuition of the truth behind material phenomena that is the lack of the essence. By viewing teachings of the Buddha and his proposed way for salvation from this perspective, it can be stated that Buddhist mystic has definitely decided to pass from the material world toward the truth beyond it and has prepared himself to move from the material to the meaning by taking steps in the path that Buddha called the *Eightfold Path*.

After explaining the nature of the spiritual journey in Islamic mysticism and philosophy of the East, it may be questioned that what the means of this journey is and how the spiritual and intellectual journey from the material world to the world of meaning and truth is conducted. This question might be answered based on *The Eye of Insight* in Islamic mysticism or philosophy of the East.



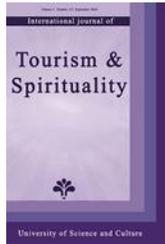
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### **The Eye of Insight and Third Eye**

The spiritual journey from the material world to the world of meaning and truth that is depicted as a spiritual journey in Islamic mysticism or philosophy of East, necessitates taking a different approach to nature and natural phenomena. In other words, if the people reflect on the world they can make a spiritual journey to the worlds of meaning and perhaps this is why in religious texts people are constantly recommended to reflect on history and nature.

Searching for Islamic sources shows that Islam has proposed a certain model for the journey and its achievements beyond the satisfaction of the usual needs. Nature and history are always considered as two main sources for the human beings and the verses that order people 'to reflect' after traveling around the world, in fact, ask the people to contemplate both nature and history and recommend people gaining wisdom and knowledge through these journeys (Homayun. 2005: 155).

God states in Holy Quran: 'Have they never journeyed through the land so that they have hearts to understand, or ears to hear with? It is not the eyes, but the hearts in the chests that are blind (Surat Al-Haj [verse 46]). In the above verse, although the circulation on the earth and traveling around the world has been ordered, this tourism has been considered to be effective when it is associated with contemplation and reflection. Also, the verse recommends that such a contemplation requires opening the eyes and heart eyes. It states that those who enjoy the appearance of the phenomena and do not think about their meanings, in fact, have closed and blinded their heart eyes. Concerning this kind of journey with reflection and contemplation, a number of scholars explained that 'Travelling around the world and tourism with open eyes and hearts toward the formulation and development of the world is a kind of monotheistic induction in world phenomena that is based on the scientific method of observation, accurate view, and sharp sense and deep thought. It is an emotional experience associated with an intellectual curiosity that is both mental and sensory. Mind and senses both are simultaneously used and the earth is the means of observation and exploration since it is one of the manifestations and



natural effects and surviving works of its predecessors (Vahedi, 1997, 3: 361-372).

Inspired by the verses of the Quran, the Muslim mystics also considered The Eye of Insight with the material eye. Kharazmi (1410, 1: 239), in his commentary on Ibn Arabi, referring to the fact that God is manifested in the material world and shows His perfection by describing their characteristics and attributes, states:

*Hear, behold by the heart ears, heart and soul eyes,  
Since it is not achieved only by talking about it  
Look at the sea lost in a drop  
Look at the sun shining in the drop*

In the above verses, seekers are recommended to open the heart eyes and ears to attain the truth for perceiving the things that cannot be described or expressed. Therefore, for explaining this issue, the main doctrine in ontology has been pointed out that states as the sea and the sun are observed in a drop, all creatures and particles in the world can reflect the truth and existence of God. However, in order to see this, The Eye of Insight should be opened because it is not visible to the material eye.

Hafiz distinguishes the material eye and The Eye of Insight and shows their appearance intuition and the meaning of world:

*Your countenance may only be seen by spiritual eyes;  
Which are not comparable to my worldly eyes.*

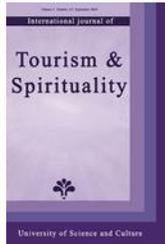
Paying attention to the unseen meaning of the world and natural phenomena should be considered in traveling in nature. While enjoying the order and harmony in natural phenomena, one should know that this order and beauty is indicative of the beauty of God and His moderating power. Men should view Him with The Eye of Insight and rather than observing the superficial beauties, His beauty should also be taken into consideration. As Saadi Shirazi states:

*We are the beggars around the Lord  
Who fell in love with Him  
You look at the face of the people*

*We are surprised at the effects of the creation  
The narrow-minded look at the fruits  
But we stare at the gardens*

Another version that shows the intuition is obtained by heart and soul can be found in the philosophy of the East. In the philosophy of East, the third eye is considered in addition to two eyes that are often closed to most of the people. Only wise men open it and see the intuition of the truth hidden behind the world. This eye in Hinduism is called *Bindu* and in Buddhism, it is called *Urna*. Bindu is a point in the center of the forehead and between the eyebrows that is the most important mental part of the body. Bindu is marked with a color spot on the forehead to remind Hindus that the meaning and purpose of life is self-knowledge and self-understanding and all activities in this life must be directed to achieve this goal (John Grims, 1996: 93).

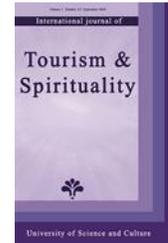
In addition, Bindu is depicted in the center of many of the Hindu ritual adornments (Yantras) and signifies certain divine beings. In this forms, Bindu may be seen as the infinitely dense point of awareness upon which the world has been developed (Jones and James D. Ryan, 2007: 85). One of the most sacred religious symbols is the word Om (ॐ) that, according to the Bindu point, should not be said aloud or should not be said at all, but it is merely perceived; however, all structures that combine sounds and form the words are obtained from Bindu. On the other hand, as we become conscious when hearing the sounds we can achieve transcendental consciousness by concentration and meditation on this point that is a dense and tense sound (Nirmalananda Giri, 2006: 5). In Hinduism, especially in Shaivism, Bindu is depicted as a spot on the forehead of the body and Shiva images and the meaning of this symbol from the *Tantra* tradition that worship Shiva shows that egg or sperm of Shiva is the principle of life and a symbol of eternity and it is somewhere the absolutes and phenomena are met (Werner, 2005: 31). Accordingly, in the practice of meditation or *Samadhi*, this point is the focal point for concentration and meditation.



In Buddhism, the third eye has always been considered as a means of knowledge, and the followers are advised to open this eye to see the meaning behind the material world. In the images of and his statues, his sanctity is displayed by the symbols that are called *Lakshana*. In Buddha art, 32 Lakshanas are depicted for Buddha that reveals Buddha has not been an ordinary man, but he has been illuminated and informed. One of the most important Lakshanas shows the head of Buddha or his whole body are surrounded by a halo and his curly hair that are a symbol of his great mind. Another Lakshana or Urna shows a point between eyebrows that reflects the third eye and spiritual thought of Buddha. In some figurines and statues of the Buddha, a gracious stone is used in the center of his forehead to show Urna (Wangu, 2009: 95). In brief, the third eye or inner eye in the philosophy of East refers to a human potential that can see whatever cannot be seen with the material eye. This concept refers to an intangible eye that helps people achieve the transcendent consciousness and awareness and understand it. Those people who open their third eye can experience the extrasensory experiences and the world beyond natural phenomena (McKenna, 2015: 2-3). Opening The Eye of Insight and third eye and viewing the world by this eye help people see manifestations of nature and beautiful world that are not visible to the material eye. Viewing and reflecting upon the meaning of the creation provides the ground for spiritual growth and so is effective in other areas of material life including spiritual tourism.

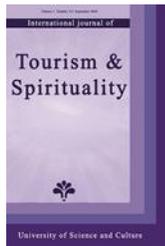
### **Spiritual journey and the individual and collective effects**

By accepting the definition and explanation of religious tourism and spiritual journey that were presented in this article, nature and the world may be regarded as the arenas that tourists can travel around for achieving the spiritual experiences. Relying on this definition, the destination of religious tourism is developed to include the issues beyond the places and religious sites and covers all the world. Using such an approach for the religious tourism is the origin of the effects and blessings in individual and social perfection. Such approach has



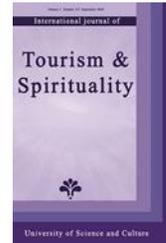
been taken into consideration in regulating the global code of ethics for tourism.

According to Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) approved by General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization in Santiago in 1999, to engage the global community in environmental protection and ethics in tourism development includes 10 principles, nine of which explain the legal and ethical standards and rules of tourism and the tenth principle presents the mechanisms of implementation of these principles. The second principle entitled 'Tourism is a means for individual and collective growth and development' emphasizes that tourism activities must be designed in such a way they can provide individual and collective growth and development fields (Kazemi, *ibid*: 139). If necessity of taking a spiritual approach to tourism changes to the dominant discourse in this field, then spiritual tourism would provide an opportunity for people to understand the grandeur of the universe by travelling around the world and observing the order of the world and know that a certain cause precedes the existence of the creatures, hence, they would realize the power of the creator and worship God that has created heaven and earth for them with all His greatness (Mahalati, 2009: 48). Undoubtedly, achieving such a cognition is an individual of great importance; because rebellion and self-orientation that is the origin of many ethical corruptions subside and observing the beauty of making people be submissive in front of Glorious God and prevents people from being rebellious. These individual effects – from the perspective of some scholars – distinguish the tourists in general definition and religious tourists or pilgrims in the specific definition. For example, Cohen distinguishing between pilgrims and tourists states that 'pilgrim moves toward the center of his world and tourism moves away from the center of his world and travels toward an enjoyable place. These two categories have different values. Pilgrim is righteous and humble and sensitive to the culture of the host country and respects it; however, the tourist is a hedonist and pays the cost for the services that receives from the target country (Timothy and Olsen, *ibid*: 22).



However, concerning the consequences of a spiritual approach to tourism in the entire of this field, it should be said that destruction of nature, natural resources, and human heritage, including archaeological and historical sites by tourists are among the negative effects of the tourism that officials and policy makers in this area are seriously concerned about and seek to find some solutions. For example, in The United Nations Environment Program a draft was designed and approved in 2000 on sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Some of the articles of this program emphasized the necessity of explaining a framework for determining tolerable environmental capacity in the field and for the sustainable management of the tourism destinations and bioenvironmental evolution of such journeys (Soleimanpour, 2009: 55). Moreover, in The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, five priorities for sustainable development in developing countries were defined. The fifth priority, which deals with the need for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, non-consumerist, and ecotourism, was regarded as a guarantor for safeguarding the cultural identity and indigenous subcultures and protecting the natural environments. Accordingly, the countries were requested to develop educational programs by developing the ecotourism development program that considers the protection and preservation of the environment and natural resources and cultural heritage in addition to encouraging tourists to regard ecotourism (ibid: 60 and 61). In World Ecotourism Summit called the Cake Summit in 2002, which specifically covered the management and ecotourism development, some recommendations were presented on ensuring the sustainability of ecotourism activities and maintaining the originality of the ecotourism products (ibid: 65).

Above decisions indicate that nature has been seriously exposed to injuries from the tourism that views nature and human heritage not as a cultural category but as consumption goods and seeks to use it with no concern about its protection. That is why, although some claim that tourism harms nature far less than what is known, they acknowledge that these activities, which nowadays are typically unsystematic and unbridled, are the main causes of the destruction of natural landscapes,

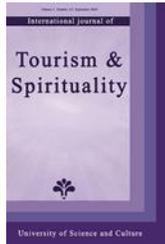


mountain slopes, beaches, rivers and seas, forests and cities (Mahalati, *ibid*: 132). Today, it is seen that the fantastic and greenery plains with beautiful flowers that clear out the grief in the heart of the observers, during weekends or other holidays, are destroyed by the tourists (*ibid*).

The incidence of these adverse in fact is the result of a new approach to tourism, which is called as mass tourism. According to some researchers, basification of tourism is a deviation from the usual flow of this phenomenon as an intercultural relationship in human life; a phenomenon that eventually has to the change of the nature of this human activity throughout history (*ibid*: 132). Mass tourism is the direction of steady flow of countless tourists to the destinations that are selected for holidays. This movement started from the 1960s with increasing wealth, long holidays, and low-cost transportation in industrialized countries and grew from these countries. At the beginning, this flow of tourism moved toward the destinations with sun, sand, and sea and, finally, sex was formed four categories of mass tourism (4S) (*ibid*).

Tourism with the above definition that is a deviation from the main tourist route is the result of a secular approach to tourism in a new era and opportunistic attitude. As long as tourism is regarded as a tool for enjoying holidays and fun and seeing the nature as a commodity consumed for higher pleasure and profit, the consequences of tourism that make officials concerned, are not prevented. Nevertheless, if spiritual tourism is not viewed as a kind of tourism, but regarded as an approach to this field, then nature not as a commodity but as a glaring masterpiece is manifested with all the wonders and glorious scenes and shows His Creator. Therefore, it provides an opportunity for the external observers to experience a sacred state and satisfy his spirit that looks for the meaning using the spiritual sense hidden in itself.

Philosophy of the East mentioned in this paper can correct the attitude of the followers of the Eastern rites toward the natural world. In this way, it can direct their attention to a kind of tourism that people use it for obtaining the spiritual experiences instead of material exploitation of nature. In practice, it is seen that this ideology underlies a certain travel pattern in Asian and South East Asian Nations as a result of a

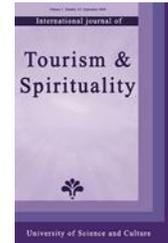


spiritual approach to tourism. In these countries, some journeys are organized to nature with the aim of meditation and thinking (Timothy and Olsen, *ibid*: 22). In Confucianism and Taoism, which both emphasize the interaction and balance between man and nature as the most important factor in self-refining, recreational activities including travel are regarded not only for mere pleasure but also to understand the value and significance of life. This viewpoint is the dominant approach to nature in these two regulations that ‘the wise see the pleasure in water and the righteous see it on the hills (*ibid*: 136).

Even in the new era, followers of personal and naturalist religions that do not follow the classical and traditional religions paid special attention to the spiritual capacities hidden in nature. These people, in different ways, look for the places that give them a sense of spirituality. Thus, they continuously select the archaeological and cultural sites, natural areas and hot springs, other healing places as their destination (*ibid*: 163). In an era that witnesses a change in perspective to the travel and ecotourism for creating a balance between tourism and natural resources, it seems that Islamic mysticism and Islamic worldview have greater capacities to design new ideas about the institutionalization of the spiritual approach to travel as well as management and implementation of these journeys. Regarding the contemplation on the history and nature (ordered in many verses of Holy Quran) not only as the way for obtaining information on the ancestors but also as the rational course from the material world to its realm of the meaning and reflection on the wonders of the universe in order to recognize their Creator, we would be able to promote spiritual approach to tourism and preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

### **Conclusion**

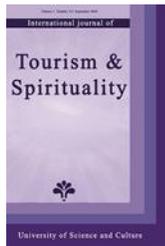
Looking at ontology of the Islamic mysticism and Eastern rituals, it is clear that these schools have the theoretical capacity required for directing a kind of tourism that regards nature as place for contemplation on wonders and sights and a pure understanding the meaning hidden in it and obtaining the absolute truth and their Creator rather than a place for enjoyment and recreation. Dealing with the



spiritual tourism as an approach in this area and view the departure from the material world to the spiritual world as the stimulators for the tourists and promote and institutionalize it, we can protect nature against some types of tourism that have destructive effects on the environment and the preservation of our environment and also take a step in the personal and moral perfection of tourists. To achieve this goal, we need to explore the theoretical capacities in philosophical and mystic schools with this particular idea and then make required plans to implement and manage these types of journeys.

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