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PRAYER - A CLOSER CONTACT WITH
REALITY

Dr. Abdul Khaliq

ABSTRACT

Prayer is often perceived as a spiritual practice that bridges the physical and divine realms, yet it can also foster a deeper connection with reality itself. Beyond its religious significance, prayer encourages mindfulness and introspection, allowing individuals to engage more deeply with their thoughts, emotions, and surroundings. It promotes a moment of stillness that enhances self-awareness, helping individuals step outside the rush of daily life to focus on deeper truths. The Tradition "*Al-Salat-o Mi'rajul-Mu'mineen*," which reflects prayer as a spiritual ascension, highlights its transformative potential to elevate believers toward divine knowledge and experience. Thinkers like Iqbal, William James, and Rudolf Otto frame prayer as an experiential encounter with God, emphasizing the personal, cognitive, and creative aspects of prayer in forming a direct relationship with the divine. Iqbal underscores prayer's role in transcending mere ritual, aligning one's will with God's and fostering a personal dialogue with the Ultimate Reality. This practice, rooted in self-reflection, cultivates moral awareness, gratitude, and emotional resilience, guiding individuals through challenges while seeking peace and strength. Ultimately, prayer as a reflective practice enables individuals to navigate the complexities of life with humility, mindfulness, and a deeper sense of purpose, integrating their understanding of the world and their role within it.

Prayer is often seen as a spiritual practice, a bridge between the physical world and the divine. However, beyond its religious and meditative associations, prayer can also be viewed as a way to foster a deeper connection with reality itself. It invites individuals to engage with the world in a more profound and reflective way, allowing them to confront both their inner lives and the external universe with greater clarity. Prayer is a moment of stillness that fosters awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and surroundings. In this sense, it helps the individual step outside the rush of daily life and be more present, focusing on what truly matters. This grounding effect brings people into closer contact with their immediate reality, helping them pause and reflect on life's deeper truths.

Al-Salat-o Mi'rajul-Mu'mineen (prayer is *mi'raj*¹ for the men of faith) is an aphorism very popular among the Muslim orthodoxy — sometimes even recognized as a saying of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). Whatever its source, the saying is profound and very significant also. Broadly speaking, it points to immeasurable heights in meritorious desert and caliber to which man can rise through the instrumentality of prayer and worship.² The prayer is here declared to be able to elevate himself to such a level that he communicates with no less a Being than God Himself and has a living, experiential knowledge of His presence. William James calls such an experience 'an intercourse with the Ideal Companion'³. This experiential knowledge happens to take place through a special sensation — spiritual sensation we may call it — which is more or less what Rudolf Otto describes as the 'faculty of divination'⁴ or what Father Poulain describes as the 'interior touch'⁵. Man, after having been made by God with His Own hands,⁶ 'came down' to the earth as the 'best of creation', 'the image of God' and as 'the bearer of Divine attributes' whom everything in the heavens and the earth is made to work for, attend to, and serve.⁷ In the act of prayer, he 'returns' to the source of his own being as if to receive for himself an occasional reminder of his "word and justification as a dynamic factor in the life of the universe"⁸ and of his inherently elevated station to which he must justify himself to be equal. It is this reminder, ever kept fresh in daily prayers, which, incidentally, tends to keep the individual away from abominable, prohibited acts and help him lead a moral life.⁹

The aphorism quoted in the beginning above also seeks to bypass the literalist commonsense view that prayer is essentially petitionary in nature so that it may be regarded as a plain request to God to interpose Himself into the usual course of events and change it to various sorts of conveniences of the petitioner as he desires. Prayer, it is implied here, is rather a plea for 'being more' rather than 'having more', for eternal spiritual enrichment rather than for temporal, material benefits. At the authentic level of man-God relationship, even if sometimes I do ask for favours, I in fact say to Him: 'O God! Grant me so and so'; and at the same time: 'O God! I submit to Your will howsoever it comes out to be and am ready to accept it and carry it out'.¹⁰ So what is really important is the attunement of my own attitude to God and a willing declaration of total surrender to His will and pleasure. This, lexically speaking, is really the entire connotation of being a (Muslim).

Iqbal, in the second chapter of his *Reconstruction*, has prefaced his views on prayer with a detailed philosophical discussion of the nature of God, 'the ultimate ground of all experience'.¹¹ The Qur'an, he points out, has emphasized the individuality and personality of God, the Ultimate Ego, Whose "I-ness is independent, elemental, absolute".¹² He goes on to offer a rationale of this point of view by giving his own interpretation of certain attributes of God and of those Qur'anic verses which apparently have a pantheistic import. This entire prefatory account was necessary to provide a suitable context for a discussion of the nature of prayer in two ways. Firstly, a philosophical understanding of God brings into clear focus the nature of religion's ambition which, according to Iqbal, 'soars higher than the ambition of philosophy. Religion is not satisfied with mere conception; it seeks a more intimate knowledge of, and association with, the object of its pursuit. The agency through which this association is achieved is, he points out, 'the act of worship or prayer'.¹³ Secondly, by bringing home to his readers the personal character of God it becomes easier for Iqbal to make them understand the nature of prayer which is an instrument of cognitive association with the 'Great Companion' that God is: Prayer, he holds, is essentially a personal encounter, a dialogue, with the Ultimate Reality.

Religious life, Iqbal points out, can be divided into three periods, namely, of faith, thought and discovery. "In the first period religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that

Command ... Perfect submission to discipline is followed by a rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority. In this period religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics—a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the third period metaphysics is displaced by psychology and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the Ultimate Reality”¹⁴ It is this direct contact with the Ultimate Reality that is the essence of prayer, according to Iqbal. Prayer is the instrument through which the individual has a vision of what was earlier the object of his faith and thought and so discovers the situation of his personality ‘in a larger whole of life’. This is the maximum to which an ordinary man can go. Prophets, the chosen cognizants and advocates of the highest truth, however, have over and above to play the role of social reformers. In their case “unitary experience tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life.”¹⁵ Thus with them prayer besides being cognitive, as is the case with an ordinary religious consciousness, is also creative.

Ibn Rushd, we are reminded here, too had categorized seekers after truth into three classes: the philosophers, the theologians and the laymen.¹⁶ The philosophers are the people of demonstration who, starting from a scratch, use their reason to reach the Ultimate Reality. The theologians, the people of dialectics, on the other hand, start from certain preconceived doctrines and beliefs and then try to reason out the truth about these doctrines. The masses, who are the people of rhetorics, seek to understand through examples, poetic persuasions and emotional appeals. The philosophers, according to Ibn Rushd, are the best of all. It is they alone who have the right to interpret the esoteric verses of the Qur’an, and then they must withhold their interpretations from the two other categories of the truth-seekers who, being men of superficialities, are liable to be led astray if exposed to the profundities of knowledge of whose assimilation they are not capable. Thus pure demonstrative reason unalloyed by beliefs and emotions is, according to Ibn Rushd, the most excellent instrument of knowledge. Given all his infatuation with, and a strong bias for, Greek rationalism and epistemic naturalism, he could not go farther than this. He could not visualize that there might be still higher ways possible in which reality can be known, and known better.

In fact, if we regard demonstration and discursive reason as the highest form of knowledge available to man, we can never be in a position to know God and for that matter, the Ultimate Reality —

whatever the name we give to this Reality. The entire history of human thought bears witness to this fact. The function of discursive reason, we know, is to conceptualize, and to conceptualize is to divide and relate. But God, being the One Unique Ultimate Reality, is *ex-hypothesi* not subject to division, analysis or composition and also He does not derive His is-ness from being a member of a rational order. So there can be no conceptual awareness of God's nature. Mentioning Kant in this respect as a typical example of rationalism, Iqbal justifies his inability to affirm the possibility of a knowledge of God: this was perfectly consistent with his rationalistic principles.¹⁷ The logical intellect confines its operation to the natural order only; the Divine order is consequently unknowable to it. It incidentally follows from all this that there can be no strictly logical proof for the existence of God in which nature is accepted as the major premises. Nature is temporal and finite whereas God is eternal and infinite. How can the conclusion belong to the order of eternity whereas the premises have been derived from the order of time. The gulf between the empirical and the trans-empirical cannot be bridged over by logical reasoning. Stoics have been known to be among the earliest to uphold a natural theology but then their God was fundamentally an existing entity of the same kind as the world. Hence the inadequacy and the inapplicability of a Stoic approach to the religion of Islam in particular which conceives God as, by and large, essentially different from nature. "The best that can be said of the arguments for the existence of God", A. C. Ewing observed, "is that they give some support to the belief not that they are really conclusive".¹⁸

Does all this mean that the door to the understanding of God is entirely barred against strictly human initiatives. Is God to remain a mysterious being simply entitled to a blind belief. Iqbal's answer is a positive 'no'. In this connection he compares the viewpoints of Kant and Ghazali. Kant held on to the 'forms of perception' and the 'categories of understanding' as the only available equipment with which we approach the objects of our knowledge and thus, consistently with his premises, held that the Ultimate Reality is unknowable. Ghazali, before Kant, had also observed that it is impossible to build theology on rational grounds, and that discursive reason is incapable to grasp the Real. But according to the former there is still another mode of knowledge possible and this is what he calls *ma'rifat* or gnostic awareness. It is through the operativeness of this mode of knowledge that Ghazali, according to Iqbal, very rightly

vouchsafed independence of religion and secured for it the right to exist independently of science and metaphysics.¹⁹

Islam is basically a way of knowledge because in fact all higher religion is essentially experience and recognizes the necessity of experience as its foundation.²⁰ The Prophet of Islam (peace be on him) registered the culmination of the deductive modes of understanding of the earlier prophets to whom certain truths were revealed as ready-made principles of behaviour for a blind and unquestioned observance by their people. This culmination came when ultimately metaphysics was replaced by psychology²¹ and the source of revelation, the major premise hitherto accepted on authority, became the possible fact of human experience. Having become capable of such a supreme achievement man was thrown back henceforth to tap his own resources so as to have the joy of reaching the Ultimate through his own initiatives and efforts. Being too mature now to be led by the nose, man has been called upon to go the natural way and thus investigate into an alternative dimension of the being of God. This is what Iqbal means when he says: "The prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world". In him, he goes on to say, "life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction".²² Thus, in either way, Islam remains a way of knowing. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a prolific writer on Islam, points out that in fact "herein lies one of the major distinctions between the Islamic and the Christian points of view—Christianity is essentially a mystery which veils the Divine from man. The beauty of Christianity lies in the acceptance of God as a mystery and in bowing before this mystery. In Islam, however, it is man who is veiled from God. The Divine Being is not veiled from us; we are veiled from Him and it is for us to try to rend this veil asunder in order to know God. Islam is thus essentially a way of knowledge; it is a way of gnosis. Islam leads to that essential knowledge which integrates our being, which makes us know what we are and be what we know or, in other words, integrates knowledge and being in the ultimate unitive vision of Reality".²³

The very significant intermediate position occupied by the Prophet (peace be on him) as referred to above, also sufficiently explains the remark made by Iqbal "... all search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer. The scientific observer of nature is a kind of mystic seeker in the act of prayer".²⁴ Prayer in the sense of

canonical prayers may be understood with reference to his the position as belonging to the ‘ancient world’ whereas prayer in the form of a study of nature is to be understood with reference to his position as belonging to the ‘modern world’. The one is deductive; the other inductive. Prayers, of course, both of them are because both of them aim at the ‘ultimate, unitive vision of Reality.’ Only the approaches are different. The former realizes its objective through the recitation of, and contemplation over, certain verses of the Qur’an, the Word of God, alongwith the required bodily postures and movements; the latter through the contemplation of nature, ‘the habit of God’.²⁵ “knowledge of nature’, says Iqbal, ‘is the knowledge of God’s behavior. In our observation of nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego’.²⁶

According to the Qur’anic point of view both the forms of prayer described above are, in the final analysis, equally authentic and are ultimately reducible to the same state of affairs. This is because of the fact that there is no essential disharmony between the ‘Word of God’ and the ‘Work of God’. It is illuminative to note here that the Qur’anic word ‘*ayah*’ has been used for a verse in the Qur’an as well as for a phenomenon of nature. This shows their mutual affinity. “Nature’s Laws’, says Khalifa Abdul Hakim, “are God’s thoughts thinking themselves in orbits and tides. As there are signs of God’s power and wisdom and beauty in all nature outside man, so are these signs inscribed in the hearts of all men — the verses of God’s revelation are inscribed in the letters of light in the starry heavens, in the prophetic consciousness and in the minds and hearts of those who reflect rightly on nature within and nature without’.²⁷ The Qur’anic text, being the Word of God meant to be understood by human beings is necessarily ‘symbolic’ (in a very broad sense of this term); in its descriptions nature which is the ‘Cosmic Text’ is too a fabric of symbols. Through the language of symbols, they both speak forth the presence of God. Incidentally this explains why to Muslim physical scientists mathematics made such a strong appeal. “Its abstract nature furnished the bridge that Muslims were seeking between multiplicity (of nature) and unity (of God). It provided a fitting texture of symbols for the universe — symbols that were like keys to open the cosmic text.”²⁸

That physical nature is replete with significant pointers to the existence of God is a fact very evident to the readers of the Qur’an. When Prophet Moses, for instance, expressed his wish to see God he was directed to look towards the mountain which is just a phenomenon of nature.²⁹ Thus the way prescribed by God for His

cognition was the way through nature. Similarly the mile-stones in Prophet Abraham's way God were the natural phenomena *viz* stars, moon and the sun.³⁰ But exactly how and in what specific sense can a study of nature lead one to God. As explained above, there can be nothing of the sort of deductive demonstration involved here. Any *modus operandi* whatever in this respect is not at all of a strictly 'this-therefore-this' variety. Nature, as already pointed out, is a composition of symbols. These symbols have to be recognized as such and duly interpreted before they can be appreciated as to what do they symbolize. For this interpretative function we are required to have a 'cosmological insight' or, what Iqbal has termed, 'the vital way of looking at the universe'. It is not through logical reason but by a trans-empirical mode of perception, through 'the reason of the heart that the reason knows not of', that we can bridge up the gulf between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal and can have the experience of God the natural way. Thus, in the last analysis, the appeal of a profound observer of nature is primarily not to facts or matters of fact as they stand in their own right but rather to the basic religious intuitions. It is at the recalling of these intuitions into conscious awareness of man and bringing them into active operation in him that the Qur'anic teachings directly aim. The word *ziker*³¹ (remembrance) used for the Qur'an itself is significant. When man becomes oblivious of these intuitions, God wonders as to why his heart has been left alone to be 'locked up'.³² The phrase corresponding to this is 'expanding of the breast' (*inshirah-e sadr*): whomsoever God wishes to show the right path, he expands his breast for Islam.³³ This is what Iqbal means when he points out that the observation of nature sharpens our inner perception so that we can have a deeper vision of it (nature).³⁴ However, we may hasten to point out here that this 'sharpening' of inner perception is not entirely due to man's effort. It requires, as Iqbal correctly points out, the grace of God to eventualize.³⁵ On this subject voluminous literature has been provided by the mystics of Islam who have invariably conceived Divine knowledge as direct and immediate and heavily due to the initiative of God Himself. Al-Ghazali, for instance, says in his autobiographical account *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*: "Attainment of it (the truth) did not come by systematic demonstration or marshalled argument but by a light which God Most High cast into my breast. This light is the greater part of knowledge. Whoever thinks that the understanding of things Divine rests upon strict proof has in his thought narrowed down the wideness of God's mercy".³⁶ It is by virtue of this concept of Divine

grace or *taufiq*, as it is known in characteristic *sufi* terminology, that God remains the logically prior objective of the revealed characterizations of His person in spite of the temporal priority of nature and natural observation.

Incidentally, all this speaks eloquently for the importance that must necessarily be attached to a process of self-culture i.e. to the inculcation of an appropriate orientation of mind and a keen receptivity for the grace of God. By virtue of contemplation and thinking and a clean living we in fact rend asunder the veils of our own superficiality and ignorance. To grasp the meaning of the word as well as the work of God we have to enter into the deeper dimensions of our own being and at the same time keep our physical eyes open. To those who are themselves superficial and uninitiated everything will appear to be superficial too—incapable of any esoteric import. It is such persons who are condemned by the Qur'an as spiritually diseased and the ones involved in self-deception.³⁷ A person who is blind here, says the Qur'an, will be blind in the hereafter,³⁸ meaning thereby that one who does not see the facts of life and existence with the correctness of attitude here and now will never be able to have the bliss of the beatific vision of the Ideal.

Thus the essence of prayer, according to Iqbal, lies in going from the finite to the Infinite. It signifies a process of liberation—liberation from finite, temporal existence and from all that it entails. This being a stupendous task, co-operation of God is needed all along, as already pointed out, which is readily granted to the deserving candidates. Incidentally this entire phenomenon of 'man realizing God through nature and God Himself co-operating with man in this endeavour,' incidentally, speaks well for the essential unity of all existence. Everything is 'more or less' the same. All are egos, as Iqbal puts it. "The world in all its details from the mechanical movement of what we call the atom of matter to the free movement of thought in the human ego is", he declares, "the self-revelation of the 'Great I am'".³⁹ Every atom of Divine energy', he goes on to say, "however low in the scale of existence is an ego. But there are degrees in the expression of egohood. Throughout the entire gamut of being runs the gradually rising note of egohood until it reaches its perfection in man."⁴⁰

However, even an ordinary human ego is not entirely perfect because it is not absolutely free. What we have called above the superficial self of man, from which he has to achieve liberation, is, because of its attachment with serial time, determined by the

mechanics of material existence. The real self which is eternal and lives in pure duration is purely free and can most genuinely say 'I am'. In fact "it is the degree of the intuition of I-ness that determines the place of a thing in the scale of being. I too say 'I am' but my I-ness is dependent and arises out of the distinction between the self and the not-self. The Ultimate Self, in the words of the Qur'an, 'can afford to dispense with all the worlds'. To Him the not-self does not present itself as a confronting other — His I-ness is independent, elemental, absolute".⁴¹ Now, as prayer, according to Iqbal is essentially man's translation from temporal associations to a participation in eternal existence, from the drudgery of worldly business to a meeting with God, 'the Ultimate Source of life and freedom', it is to be understood as "essentially ego's escape from mechanism to freedom".⁴² The Qur'an clearly visualizes the possibility of such a translation when it says:

O Company of djin and men, if you can overpass the bounds of the heaven and the earth, then overpass them. But by power alone shall ye overpass them.⁴³

In this act of freeing oneself from the spatio-temporal determiners of finite existence, man continues moving towards the ideal of infinity. And the closer to the ideal he is the more perfect he becomes in respect of his individuality, according to Iqbal, so that there remains lesser and lesser fear of the disintegration of his personality even in the face of the heaviest odds and so makes it possible for him to have an encounter with God, the Infinite, the Absolute. But, to begin with, how can infinity be reconciled with individuality. Iqbal is sometimes accused of having developed the 'self-contradictory' and 'illogical' concept of an 'infinite personality'. However, he has taken pains to justify this concept by explaining in detail that the personality, that God is, is Infinite intensively: not extensively. It is interesting to compare his views in this regard with those of some modern European thinkers. Friedrich Von Hugel, for instance, writes: "Indeed we can safely hold with Lotze not only that personality is compatible with infinitude but that the personality of all finite beings can be shown to be imperfect precisely because of the finitude and hence the perfect personality is compatible only with the conception of an infinite being..."⁴⁴

In view of the above, like a person engaged in ritual prayers whose approach is straight and direct, the observer of nature too has his own mode of travelling into the sphere of eternity and freedom. The natural system of causes and effects, which is the subject-matter of his studies, seems to imply strict determinism; but this is not the

final state of affairs as to the behavior of things. Firstly, “the causal chain ... is itself an artificial construction of the ego for its own purposes. The ego is called upon to live in a complex environment and he cannot maintain his life in it without reducing it to a system which would give him some kind of assurance as to the behavior of things around him”.⁴⁵ Further, “the view of his environment as a system of causes and effects is (in a way) an indispensable instrument of the ego, and not a final expression of the nature of Reality. Indeed in interpreting nature in this way the ego understands and masters its environment and thereby acquires and amplifies its freedom.”⁴⁶ How beautifully Iqbal has put it while talking of the discovery level of religious life : “It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness”.⁴⁷

This reminds me of a brilliant paper read by Professor Osman Amin of U.A.R. at the Department of Philosophy, Punjab University, Lahore⁴⁸ some years ago. He talked at length of his Philosophy of inwardness which he termed as a ‘philosophy of conscious vision’. He also called it interchangeably a ‘philosophy of freedom’ because essential freedom, as he put it, lies in ‘consciousness accompanied by comprehension, the faculty of judging according to clear and distinct reason’. Elaborating a distinction between automatism and consciousness, Prof. Amin made reference to the distinction clearly drawn by Bergson between two very different ways of knowledge, the one being the way of the inward vision, of intellectual sympathy, the other being the way of exterior vision, of applying the testimony of senses or applying the method of logical analysis alone. Consider, Bergson is reported to have said, the difference between the knowledge that one could have of a town from a multitude of photos taken from all possible positions and the knowledge one would have of the same town if one lived in it, loved it, and enjoyed roaming about it. It is only the latter knowledge that is profound and gives control and mastery to one over the object of his knowledge. The former, being fragmentary, binds one down to superficialities. In terms of profundity/superficiality of knowledge the distinction corresponds pretty closely to the distinction made by Spinoza between passive and active emotions, between the state of human bondage and the state of human freedom.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a religio-philosophical thinker, once made a distinction between the fundamental and protective injunctions of the Qur'an. The latter of these are secondary in importance. Their function is simply to protect the spirit of the former which are of primary concern from the Qur'anic point of view. Sayyid Ahmad specially mentioned the institution of canonical prayers to illustrate his point of view. Prayer—and for that matter any religious duty—has an essence as well as a form. The essence of prayer as we have already seen is to have an intimate association with the Great 'I am'. Now this essence has found expression in a variety of forms. The very fact that these forms have differed with different times and circumstances shows that they are not ends in themselves and should not become a matter of dispute. "To every people, ' says the Qur'an, 'have we appointed ways of worship which they observe. Therefore let them not dispute this matter with you". Which side we turn our face while praying, for example, is not a part and parcel of the most-essential spirit of prayer. Iqbal justifiably quotes Qur'anic reference in this regard:

The East and the West is God's: Therefore whichever way you turn there is the face of God."⁴⁹

There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West.⁵⁰

However, the Qur'anic declaration that 'there is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West' and so on must be carefully understood and accepted only after making certain qualifications. It, of course, should not at all be taken to imply that various formalities involved in our daily prayers like adhering to certain pre-conditions of cleanliness, choice of a particular direction, joining a congregation in perfect obedience to the *imam* who leads the prayers, and such other observances are futile in any absolute sense of the term. If we accept this interpretation that would lead to a totally esoteric attitude in religious matters. It would unfortunately encourage a sharp distinction between *shari'at* and *tariqat*, a doctrine very popular with the ungenue class of sufis, giving an undue importance to the essential at the entire expense of the formal. The verses rather simply mean that these formalities in their own right i.e. when they are divested of their spiritual content are useless. Those who fulfil the formalities of prayer but are oblivious of its essential character have been condemned by the Qur'an as the people of the hell.⁵¹

The point of view enunciated by Iqbal is that the importance of the formal requirements of prayer— when the essential character of prayer is also retained— lies in the fact that they serve to fortify the

spiritual content and enhance the desired effect. If every time a man goes to prayer he has to undertake a special course of preparation in terms of physical cleanliness, wearing clean garments, giving due recognition to the portion of the day (because to each specified portion thereof is assigned one particular prayer), selecting a clean spot of earth for the performance of the ceremony etc. —that all serves to vouchsafe the attunement of attitude to a single objective and the centralization of attention in respect of it. When a seeker of God has relinquished all worldly business which would at the most be an indirect approach to God and is all set for an ‘I-Thou’ encounter, he faces towards the direction of the *ka’ba* and makes a verbal commitment also: ‘I have turned my face in all sincerity towards Him Who has created the heavens and the earth and I am not of the polytheists’.⁵² Body and mind being closely related, various postures of the body which the person adopts while offering his prayers are a real factor in determining the attitude of the mind. They symbolize humility and single-mindedness and thus accentuate the spiritual realization. Extremely helpful in this spiritual realization is the Prophet’s (peace be on him) directive that the prayee must be as sure of the being of God as if he is seeing Him and that, if that is not possible for him to feel, then he should have at least the conviction that God is seeing him. When a person’s entire attention is thus absorbed, naturally the operation of all his bodily sensations is held in abeyance. Many stories to confirm this psychological fact have been related of the mystics of all times.

Prayer is a method of reflection and introspection. Engaging in prayer provides an opportunity for self-reflection. It is a space to examine one’s desires, fears, motivations, and aspirations. By doing so, individuals can recognize patterns in their thinking and behavior that influence their lives, and they can work towards aligning their actions with their core values. This introspection leads to a more authentic and conscious experience of life. Prayer often includes an expression of gratitude, helping individuals shift their focus from what they lack to what they have. This shift in perspective allows people to see the abundance in their lives, fostering a deeper appreciation for the present moment and the beauty of everyday experiences. Recognizing blessings cultivates a more positive outlook, grounding one in the reality of interconnectedness with others and the environment.

Through prayer, people often search for meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives. This search is not confined to religious

settings but is a universal quest for understanding the greater context of one's existence. Prayer can guide individuals to explore their place in the world and how they contribute to something larger than themselves. This process nurtures a closer relationship with the reality of their personal mission and societal role. In times of hardship, prayer can be a way to find peace and emotional balance. It offers a space for surrendering to what cannot be controlled, accepting life's uncertainties, and seeking strength from a higher power or within oneself. This resilience helps individuals face reality with courage and a sense of calm, no matter how challenging their circumstances may be.

In conclusion, prayer, when understood as a reflective practice, can deepen one's connection to reality by encouraging mindfulness, gratitude, meaning-making, and emotional resilience. It enables individuals to confront both the visible and invisible aspects of existence with humility and openness, fostering a more integrated and conscious life experience.

Notes And Reference

- ¹ *Mi'raj* is the technical term in Islamic literature to denote the event of Divinely initiated, meta-spacial journey of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) towards celestial heights in order to have 'face-to-face' cognitive experience of, and a dialogue with, God, the Holy, the Supreme.
- ² Cf., for example, Allama Muhammad Iqbal (*Bal-e Jibreel*, p.40/364),
سبق ملا ہے یہ معراج مصطفیٰ سے مجھے
کہ عالم بشریت کی زد میں ہے گردوں
- ³ *Principles of Psychology*, vol I, p.316
- ⁴ Cf. H.J.Paton, *The Modern Predicament*, p.162
- ⁵ *Ibid.* p.152
- ⁶ *Qur'an*, 38:75
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 22:65
- ⁸ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religions Thought in Islam*, p.74
- ⁹ *Qur'an*, 29:45
- ¹⁰ The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said *الدعاء مع العبادہ* i.e. prayer is the essential component of servitude to God. This *hadith* adequately brings out the status of prayer in Islam.
- ¹¹ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.50 Islam
- ¹² *Ibid*, p.45
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p.71
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.143
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.100
- ¹⁶ Cf. George F. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*: translation of Ibn Rushd's *Fasl al-Maqal* ...
- ¹⁷ Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.4
- ¹⁸ 'Philosophy' (journal), January 1965, article: 'Awareness of God'.

- 19 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.4
20 *Ibid*, pp. 143-144
21 *Ibid*, p.143
22 *Ibid*, p. 100
23 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, pp. 21-22
24 Allama Muhamma Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.73
25 Qur'an, 17:77 etc
26 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.45
27 Edward F. Barrett (ed.), *University of Notre Dame Law Institute Proceedings*, article 'Natural Law in Muslim Tradition', pp. 35-36
28 Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, p.25
29 *Qur'an*, 7:143
30 *Ibid*, 6:76-80
31 *Ibid*, 21:50 etc.
32 *Ibid*, 47:24
33 *Ibid*, 6:125
34 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p.72
35 Dr. Javed Iqbal (ed.), *Stray Reflections:the private note book of Muhamamd Iqbal*, reflection No.
36 W. M. Watt, *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* (English translation of *Al- Munqidh min al-Dalal*), P.28-
37 Qur'an, 2:9
38 *Ibid*, 17:72
39 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p.57
40 *Ibid*, p.57
41 *Ibid*, p. 45
42 *Ibid*, p.87
43 Qur'an, 35:33
44 Quoted in Naheed Qutab, *The Philosophy of Prayer* – an unpublished M.A thesis lying in the Punjab University Library
45 Allama Muhammad Iqbal, *op.cit.*, p. 86
46 *Ibid.*, p 86
47 *Ibid.*, p. 143
48 Journal '*Al-Hikami*', 1973, pp 1-8
49 Qur'an, 2:115
50 *Ibid*, 2:177
51 *Ibid*, 107:4-5
52 *Ibid*, 6:79

IQBAL'S CRITIQUE OF TASAWWUF:
REINTERPRETING MYSTICISM IN THE
LIGHT OF DYNAMIC SPIRITUALITY

Aadil Farook

ABSTRACT

According to Iqbal (d. 1356/1938), when Islam passed through Western and Central Asia, it was influenced by what he calls *ajamiyyat* i.e. Persianism.¹ Consequently Sufism was heavily influenced by this, losing therefore much of its original character. What are these influences that he is so critical about? Does his critique imply a rejection of Sufism in total? This article aims to address these and similar other questions.

¹ Muhammad Iqbal, "Islam and Mysticism," *The New Era*, Lucknow, 28 July 1917, pp. 250-51, as cited in *Speeches Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, pp. 154-6, compiled and edited by Latif Ahmed Sherwani (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1995), p. 155, hereafter cited as Iqbal, *Speeches and Writings*.

Iqbal's Critique of *Tasawwuf*

In Shuja Alhaq's opinion, Iqbal, at the outset of his career was favorably disposed towards Sufism. His stay in Europe however proved to be a turning point in his life, for on returning to India he became an "apostle of orthodoxy."¹

Following this stream of thought we trace Iqbal's critique of Sufism.

Writing in 1900, Iqbal is of the view that mysticism is veiled metaphysics, a system of verification through experience;² in 1908 he is of the view that Vedantist and Buddhist idea of absorption and annihilation which he equates with pantheism found its way into certain forms of Sufism.³ In 1915 "Buddhism, Persian Sufism, and allied forms of ethics will not serve our purpose. But they are not wholly useless, because after periods of great activity we need opiates narcotics for some time. These forms of thought and action are like nights in the days of life."⁴ In 1917 Iqbal rejects Hellenic-Persian mysticism as self-mystification and nihilism.⁵ During the same period, in a letter (dated 13th Nov. 1917) addressed to Maulāna Shiblī Nu'mānī⁶ he disclosed that he though he was initiated in the Qādrī *silsilah* (pl. *salāsīl*, lit: chain of initiation, Sufī order), he believed that *wujūdī* Sufism⁷ was an alien plant of *ajam*, and that the dilemma of *wujūd* arose from Buddhism. Ḥāzrat Muḥyī al-Dīn's mission had been to cleanse Islam of *ajamiyyat*, nevertheless the Qādiriyyah and the Naqshbandiyyah *salāsīl* or orders suffered from this phenomenon. In 1928 he states that the inner element of religion is known by the unfortunate name of mysticism,⁸ that Muslim Philosophy was influenced by Greek thought, Muslim theology by Magian culture (which was dualistic in spirit); devotional Sufism alone understood the significance of inner experience as a source of knowledge.⁹

These, in short, were what Iqbal considered as the un-Islamic elements that entered Islam as it passed through Persia and Central Asia on its way to the sub-continent. He was critical of Hellenic Persian mysticism, of the Buddhist concept of annihilation, of pantheism, of the influence of Greek thought on Muslim Philosophy and of the Magian culture that influenced Muslim theology. However contrary to Alhaq's claim he consistently believed Sufism to be an experience whereby the self discovered its metaphysical status. Had he believed that Sufism *per se* was non-Islamic he would not have acknowledged being a Qādrī initiate.

Iqbal at the beginning of his career considered mysticism as veiled metaphysics, basically an intellectual activity. In *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, he claimed that Sufism was an amalgamation and further development of both Semitic and Aryan thought.¹⁰ In his view the Semitic formula of salvation could be summarized as "Transform your will" with the implication that for the Semite, man's essence is his will. For the Aryan the formula is "Transform your understanding," the essence of man for them is thought, not will. The Sufis assimilated both trends and developed the formula further from will and thought to love, which for them was the supreme principle in creation.¹¹ He believed Sufism to be more Aryan than Semitic.

Iqbal analyzed the foundational beliefs of those religions which in his view affected Islam most i.e., Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. On his analysis, in Buddhism the central theme was that the universe and man were dominated by forces of pain and the only means of escaping this pain was freedom from individuality through annihilation. In Christianity the foundational belief was the concept of sin. Man was born of sin from which he could not escape without the help of a Redeemer. In Zoroastrianism, the universe was partly good and partly bad. There was an incessant struggle going on in man and nature for the supremacy of good or evil forces and man needed help in this struggle. Thus in Buddhism the predominant factor in nature was pain, in Christianity sin, and in Zoroastrianism struggle.¹² It seems that Iqbal saw the contemporary Sufi way of life based on renunciation, inaction, self-denial, the need for a mediating shaykh, and the inner struggle of purification as deriving from these three sources. Iqbal pointed out that the concept of Savior-ship necessitated priesthood in religion and autocracy in politics exposing man to the dangers of despotism in both fields. The spiritual emancipation of man was not possible with such beliefs. In his view there was no mediation between the sinner and God such as required in Christianity, and that every person was entitled to his own due.¹³

Iqbal believed man's essence was will, not intellect. Man was a "...unit of force, an energy, a will, a germ of infinite power, the gradual enfoldment of which must be the object of all human activity."¹⁴ For him therefore spiritual growth involved the metamorphosis of the will.

Self-denial and annihilation was the aim of the Buddhist and the Hindu who sought release from an incessant cycle of births and re-births. Iqbal did not agree to such annihilation.¹⁵ This world was a field of action where man must develop his ego into personality. Through ego-sustaining activity he may buy a ticket to immortality.¹⁶

As ego-sustaining activity is a struggle between man and his environment, for Iqbal therefore, such activity (or *mujāhadah*, lit: fight, struggle) was not an internal struggle as conducted by the Sufis, but an external one by which man achieved *baqā`* (lit: - subsistence).

The Arabic word for striving, endeavor, effort is *jihād* and comes from the root *jhd*. Some derivations from this root are *jahadah* i.e., to do or try ones utmost, to make every conceivable effort; *mujāhadah* i.e., to fight or battle; *ijtibād* i.e., effort, also independent judgment in a legal or theological question as opposed to *taqlīd*. There is therefore the principle of effort and struggle imbibed in the meaning of all these derivations. Ego-sustaining activity is *jihād*, taken in its broad sense, i.e., to strive and make every conceivable effort in order to approach or acquire proximity to God. According to the *Qur'an*; "O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive with might and main in his cause: that ye may prosper."¹⁷ For Iqbal the center of life, its essence is personality, which is a state of tension. That which maintains this state of tension is that which makes man immortal. Love strengthens the ego or personality just as *sual* i.e., asking or soliciting weakens it.¹⁸ For him all that is achieved without personal effort and striving is *sual*. Effort and struggle therefore receive an important place in his thought. This effort however is subjugated to love and aimed at acquiring proximity to God.

It would be pertinent to point out at this stage that early Sufism developed in the period when Islam was expanding and wealth (accompanied by ease) was pouring in. Sufis therefore, in an attempt to curb the materialistic tendencies that were making in-roads, focused on drawing the Community from excessive involvement with the world to a state of detachment from it. Iqbal's times were different. The Muslim world was in decline. Now the need was felt in the opposite direction, i.e., an active engagement with the world. However in both cases the aim was always to acquire proximity to God. Previously God could not be approached with a heart given to love of the world; now God could not be approached with a heart defeated and humiliated by the world. In such conditions world-negation was tantamount to dissipation of the ego, to death.

As Iqbal saw spiritual growth closely bound to ego-sustaining activity it is not surprising that he was unsympathetic to certain Sufi practices such as the contemplations practiced by the Naqshbandiyyah which in his view were borrowed from the Indian Vedantist; an imitation of the Hindu doctrine of *Kundalinī*. "Such methods of contemplation are quite un-Islamic in character, and the higher Sufis do not attach any importance to them."¹⁹ At another

place he is critical of the method of illuminating the *laḡā'if* (lit: - subtlety, in Sufism, an organ or center of spiritual perception, subtle essence) which in his view is self-mystification, “‘illuminations’ -blue, red and yellow Reality springing up from the cells of an overworked brain.”²⁰

To sum up, for Iqbal the essence of man was will. Sufism was more inclined to the Aryan modes of thought rather than the Semitic emphasis on will, and therefore the Sufis were not men of action but of contemplation. Persian Sufism, in his view encouraged a dissipation of the will rather than a strengthening of it. Iqbal believed in achieving spiritual growth through an active life based on what he called ego sustaining acts. He therefore focused on subsistence of the self, and was critical of the concept of annihilation of self-hood that demanded withdrawal from the world. What exactly is meant by annihilation?

Iqbal and Annihilation

According to Iqbal, Persian Sufism assimilated the Buddhist idea of *Nirvana*, (*fanā`*/ annihilation) and attempted to build a metaphysical system on this idea.²¹ Speaking on "Islam and *Ajamī Taṣawwuf*" at a meeting of the Anjuman-i Himāyat-i Islām held in 1914, he expressed the view that Persian Sufism aimed at annihilating the very consciousness of individuality or selfhood. Iqbal believed that the individual's self, his personality was something to be nurtured and developed and not annihilated. It was this very essence of the individual that alone was capable of knowing his Creator. Such a view was therefore un-Islamic.²² He believed that from the 14th century onwards, Shaykh al Akbar Muḡyī al-Dīn ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 560/1240) influence was to be seen in the intellectual atmosphere of the region, particularly in Persian poetry.²³ Hindu pantheism had been an intellectual affair; unfortunately the Persian poets raised the subject to the level of heart, robbing the Muslims of all taste for action.

Khalīfah ‘Abd al-Ḥākīm points out that Iqbal was critical of annihilation because it led to a denial of free will, to fatalism and determinism. He points out that Iqbal was greatly inclined to Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) because he amongst all the Sufis was the greatest exponent of the freedom of the human will.²⁴ As Iqbal was of the opinion that Persian concept of annihilation was originally inspired by Buddhist/Hindu ideals, an attempt is made to analyze the Persian Sufi concept of annihilation to see if Iqbal was justified in his critique of this concept.

Annihilation in Persian Sufism

"*Kullu man 'alayhā faʾān, wa yabqā wajhu rabbika...* (All that is on earth will perish; But will abide the Face of thy Lord.)"²⁵ The various terms in Sufism such as negation (*naḥī*), affirmation (*asbāt*); annihilation/ obliteration (*fanā*)²⁶ and subsistence/ establishment (*baqā*)²⁷ find their root in the above quoted verse of the *Qurʾān*.

The concept of annihilation as a part of Sufism is to be found prior to Islam's movement through Central Asia as a theme of discussion among the School of Baghdad, e.g., for Junayd Baghdādī (d. 298/910), Sufism "...demands the annihilation (*fanā*) of the servant's attributes, which in turn implies subsistence (*baqā*) of God's attributes..."²⁸ Annihilation therefore is a process where one set of attributes is replaced by another and does not mean a complete dissipation as Buddhism requires.

The importance of this doctrine is that it distinguishes the Sufi position from the non-Islamic concepts of *ittihād*, i.e., the idea of identifying and merging of the human ego with God; and *ḥulūl*, i.e., the incarnation of God in man. According to Shaykh 'Alī Hujwīrī (d. 464/1072), annihilation is not loss of essence or destruction of personality, but it is a vision of the majesty of God which overwhelms the Sufi so that all else is obliterated from his mind.²⁹ While explaining the doctrine as expounded by Abū Aḥmad al-Muzaffir, Hujwīrī tells the reader that subsistence is not possible in annihilation for both terms negate each other. Essences cannot be annihilated, only attributes can. "A man's will (*ikhtiyār*) is an attribute of himself, and he is veiled by his will from the will of God. Necessarily the Divine will is eternal and the human will is phenomenal, and that which is eternal cannot be annihilated."³⁰ Annihilation then involves a transmutation of the will. For 'Ayn al-Quzāt (d. 526/1132) a Persian Sufi from Hamadan, spiritual consciousness cannot exist without annihilation of lower self or ego. Annihilation is the product of discipleship and can be attained through service to one who has annihilated himself. The ideal disciple is one who loses or annihilates himself in the master. To achieve this he must put all, even his religion, at stake, for one who follows his religion is still a disciple of his own personal religion and not his master's. A disciple who follows his own desire is "a self-worshipper and an egotist. Discipleship is to adore the master (*murādi pīr parastī bunwad*) and to gird oneself with the cincture of Almighty God and his Prophet (peace be upon him!)." ³¹ Here too annihilation involves a transmutation of will, in other words adopting divine attributes, or in Iqbal's terminology developing the ego into Personality.

The ideal disciple is the one who "loses himself in the master;"³² he must die to self-hood through love of God. How does one love an abstract unseen entity? For the Sufis, love is beheld in the mirror of the guide. Annihilation in the guide is followed by annihilation in the soul of Muḥammad (s.a.w). According to 'Ayn al-Quḏāt, whoever desires to acquire gnosis of the Divine Essence must make the soul of his reality into a mirror and gaze therein. When he does this he will recognize therein the soul of Muḥammad.³³ Next follows annihilation in Allah, "Lo! Kings, when they enter a township, ruin it."³⁴ In this stage the individual beholds his own being reflected in the mirror of the Eternal Being. When the Prophet said "Whoever has seen me has seen Reality," he was referring to this station. (To this one may add the maxim, "He who knows his self knows his Lord.") 'Ayn al-Quḏāt points out that Ḥallāj and Bisṭāmī's statements referred to the same spiritual station.

Contrary to the Buddhist conception of annihilation, in Sufism therefore there is no such thing as annihilation for its own sake; annihilation is sought to obtain self-realization. This is supported by Junayd's view of annihilation.³⁵ When the Persian Sufi is talking of annihilation he still admits the fact of the existence of the individual, for the whole journey brings him back to himself. Through annihilation in the shaykh and the Prophet the *sālik* is brought to the stage of witnessing; God becomes the Mirror in which the *sālik* sees the reality of the Prophet, and his own reality. Only by annihilating the smaller "I" can the seeker have knowledge of his greater Self. As seen in this light, Iqbal would not differ for he too talks of the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite.³⁶ In Buddhist and Hindu forms of thought complete annihilation is to be achieved where man ceases to exist, thus freeing himself from the unending chain of re-incarnation. For the Sufi annihilation is the pre-condition for a higher existence i.e., *baqā`*, a concept that Iqbal advocates too.

It would perhaps be more appropriate to say that Iqbal focused his attention on *baqā`*, for the object of moral life is to nurture and establish the Trust, i.e. the self, which is the divine part of man. "Live wakeful and meditating on God! Whatever thou doest, let it be thine aim therein to draw nigh to God, That His Glory may be made manifest by thee."³⁷ He warns the reader; "Do not Abandon Self! Persist therein!"³⁸ The individual is not to let go of the self, like a drop dispersing in the ocean, but rather the self is like the drop that can accommodate the whole ocean. In Iqbal's thought man did not lose himself in God, but God was encompassed in man's heart. Reference is to a Tradition that loosely translates as the heaven and the earth do not contain Me yet I am contained in the heart of a

mu`min (believer). This expressed in *wujūdī* terms is God “finding” Himself in the heart of His votary!

It remains to be added that the Persian Sufi, and all others, make discipleship an integral part of the spiritual journey. As noted above Iqbal did not entertain any notions of mediation in religion. Can one thus say that he rejected the role of the guide? In the *Asrār-i Khudī* Iqbal tells the reader that the process of self development or education of the ego is best carried out under the guidance of a self realized person, a Perfect Man.³⁹ Iqbal depicts the role of a spiritual guide and pays glowing tribute to al-Hujwīrī, who was a lover who taught the secret of love, and had reached the station of perfection. Iqbal himself considered Rūmī to be his spiritual guide. It appears that he accepted the shaykh in the role of teacher but not as mediator.

Iqbal and Pantheism

Iqbal was critical of pantheism, which he equated with *wahdat-al-wujūd* (unity or oneness of being). In his view pantheism was the consequence of an intellectual view of the universe. He disapproved of those schools of Sufism that had adopted this mode of thought. Iqbal in his stay in Europe had closely studied the philosophies of Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Bergson. They, in turn, had been influenced by Spinoza.⁴⁰

In pantheism, such as e.g., in Spinoza's system, there is a complete and rigid determinism; God, mind, matter is inextricably interwoven and design and purpose are not accommodated. In Russell's assessment of Spinoza everything is ruled by an absolute logical necessity with no such thing as free will in the mental sphere, or chance in the physical world.⁴¹ Iqbal's own thought militates against such a view. First of all man occupies a central position to creation; he is the vicegerent.⁴² Secondly, Iqbal's conception of God as a unique Individual⁴³ moves totally against the pantheistic conception of the god-head as a mathematical entity underlying all existence. Thirdly, Iqbal sees man as the architect of his own destiny, who can intervene in the causal chain through the operation of faith,⁴⁴ he believes in evolution which is teleological as goals and purposes acting from within determine acts.⁴⁵ In Spinoza's thought to be free is to be free from desire, while in Iqbal's thought to desire that which is beautiful and good (which is incidentally *ihsān*, also a Sufi goal) prepares man for a life of action, which in turn nurtures the ego.

To associate pantheism with *wahdat al-wujūd* and Sufism may largely be credited to early Western scholarship. Unfortunately, even Muslim scholars, who should have been in a better position to

appreciate the difference, followed this trend.⁴⁶ It appears that Iqbal was influenced in this respect by Nicholson whose view he accepted with astonishing naivety. Now that more research has been dedicated to this field, in particular to Ibn al-‘Arabī, such misconceptions have largely been cleared.

Pantheism is a distinct philosophy from *wahdat al-wujūd*; the one sees God only as an impersonal principle immanent in nature while the other sees a personal God who is both immanent as well as transcendent. Iqbal himself subscribed to this view.⁴⁷ In his early career he was of the view that Bisṭāmī and Ḥallāj were influenced by pantheism, however in *The Reconstruction* he concedes to the fact that Ḥallāj never denied the transcendence of God,⁴⁸ and that their ecstasy was inspired by a unitive experience of “the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite.”⁴⁹ Iqbal’s description of mystic experience in *The Reconstruction*⁵⁰ further indicates that not only did he have insight into the process of self-realization but of his having had a personal experience of this kind. Iqbal’s

...treatment of Ḥallāj, with whose work he became acquainted through Louis Massignon's books, show an extraordinary insight into the phenomenon of the enthusiastic mystic who has achieved an experience that every faithful person is entitled to reach, but which is denied by most of the common believers, who cling only to the word of the revelation, not recognizing the spirit.⁵¹

Iqbal’s Critique of Hellenic-Persian Mysticism

In “Islam and Mysticism,” Iqbal takes to task those people who preached an esoteric doctrine that was beyond the *shari‘ah*. In his view these were pre-Islamic Persian mystic beliefs that found their way into the body of Islam as it passed through Persia and Central Asia.⁵² The question therefore arises if Sufism is an esoteric doctrine? Faḥrur Raḥmān does not agree that Sufism can be defined as the esoteric aspect of Islam as it implies something that is deliberately kept hidden such as the secret doctrines of the Baṭīnīs. In his view this nomenclature falls short because it does not entail any religious experience.⁵³ One may say that Sufism is the attempt to discover the Hidden in the manifest. Sufism is not an esoteric doctrine, and as Iqbal does not mention Sufism or in fact any other doctrine specifically, it is possible that he may be alluding to Ismā‘īlī beliefs, which espouse esoteric teachings.

He rejected Hellenic-Persian mysticism as self-mystification and nihilism that shut its eyes to the facts of life.⁵⁴ Iqbal was also critical of Hellenic thought as the world is seen either as a necessary emanation in neo-Platonism, or as an independent, pre-existent eternal principle, while he upheld the Islamic belief of creation *ex*

nihilo.⁵⁵ In his view matter was a form of spirit, which was the ultimate principle.⁵⁶ He was critical of Plato because for him the world was an imperfect reflection of the world of ideas and therefore unreal, and matter existed as an independent principle, not derived from the Ideas. According to W. T. Stace, "Ideas and matter stand face to face in Plato's system, neither derived from the other, equally ultimate, co-ordinate, absolute realities. This is sheer dualism."⁵⁷ The Naqshbandiyyah Mujaddidiyyah claim a similar belief, though in their view this world does not have any substantial reality, the only Reality belonging to God.⁵⁸ According to their doctrine the *wahdat al-shubūh* (unity of perception) which they developed as a reformed substitute of the *wahdat-al wujud* more in keeping with orthodox Sunni theology, the world is not-being, with Being reflected on its non-existence. Thus not-being somehow is a principle that exists. Sirhindī's dualism is based on a distinction of Essence and Attributes that leans heavily on Māturīdian theology. It is this theology that Iqbal considered as Magian.

In Iqbal's view Persian thought was a victim to dualism of being and not-being, or light and darkness, matter and spirit.⁵⁹ Iqbal believed in the unity of thought and being,⁶⁰ matter is derived from spirit, it is not independent. However in certain places Iqbal's own philosophy appears to end up in a pluralism of egos or wills, each will or self an independent and exclusive unit. The more independent, the higher its status in the scale of existence; the highest being is God, for His independence is Absolute, He "can afford to dispense with all the worlds."⁶¹ Man who cannot achieve such independence is highest according to his proximity to God. Yet man is never seen as separate from God, an independent entity. "There is no waking up without You from Non-being's sleep, No being without You, No non-being with You,"⁶² and "If you desire to know the secret of eternity, Then open your eyes to yourself, For you are many, you are one, You are concealed and you are manifest."⁶³ Now Iqbal himself is talking in *wujūdī* terms! Alḥaq makes the claim that Iqbal, who started his career as a champion of Sufism, radically changed his position after his return from Europe, and became an "apostle of orthodoxy."⁶⁴ The above citation taken from *A Message from the East* however was published in 1920, after Iqbal had returned from Europe and therefore goes against Alḥaq's claim.

To sum up, Iqbal is critical of Hellenic-Persian mysticism for it ends up in dualism, and sees the world as an illusion. We observed that the *wahdat al-shubūh*, under the influence of Māturīdian theology makes some attempt at establishing a form of dualism, and also

teaches the unreality of the world. It may be added that while Iqbal himself is critical of dualism, he vacillates between pluralism and unity of being. [There may be pluralism in existence while Unitarianism in overriding goal/objective of all existence]

Iqbal's Critique of Persian Literature and Poetry

In Iqbal's view the literature and poetry of the Iranians, specifically Ḥāfīz, had the effect of inducing a state of apathy and inactivity. It was due to such literature that the Muslims of the 19th century had lost all enthusiasm of life along with the loss of their power and prestige. The poetry of Ḥāfīz had the effect of inducing a state of intoxication (*suker*). Iqbal, in a letter to Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī pointed out that the Prophet had educated the Companions in the state of sobriety (*ṣabūn*). *Suker* was profitable only after the wearisome stations of action (*'aml*) had been passed. In all other states *suker* did to the soul what opium did to the body.⁶⁵

The publication of the *Asrār-i Khudī* in which Iqbal openly criticized the popular Ḥāfīz, caused pandemonium; Iqbal was called an enemy not only of Sufism but also Islam.⁶⁶ Consequently Iqbal deemed it wise to withdraw and omit those lines that had injured the feelings of Ḥāfīz's admirers. Khwājah Ḥasan Nizāmī initiated a heated debate on the *Asrār*. In defense, Iqbal categorically stated that he had no enmity at all with the Sufis but in fact considered himself the dust of their feet,⁶⁷ maintaining however, that un-Islamic elements had entered in certain circles of Sufism and it was his intention to expose them. This was a consequence of taking Greek Philosophy as the frame of reference for investigating reality and trying to justify Islamic beliefs in its light. The effect of mixing philosophy with religion was that God was seen as inhering in creation, a Hindu Vedantist philosophy that was alien to the spirit of Islam. Referring to Ishrāqī mysticism Iqbal pointed out that such mysticism attempted to justify *Qur'ānic* beliefs in the light of dualist pre-Islamic Persian religions. One may point out here that the fallacy of this endeavor is that instead of measuring the relative according to the absolute, man's conception of truth is made the standard by which God's word is verified, virtually putting the cart before the horse!

From the above therefore one may say that Iqbal's critique cannot be taken as a critique of Sufism *in toto*; he was critical of the Persianisation of Islam such as Muslim Philosophy influenced by Greek thought, of Muslim theology as influenced by the Magian culture (being dualistic) and some of the Sufī schools which had fallen back on Magian type of religious experience. He was also critical of Baha'ism and Qādiānism which were "the two forms

which the modern revival of pre-Islamic Magianism has assumed.”⁶⁸ He approved of devotional Sufism which in his opinion alone tried to understand the importance of inner experience as a source of knowledge.⁶⁹ According to Raḥmān, the Mu‘taẓilah had been described as the Magians of the Muslim community for their belief in the freedom of the will. With the introduction of philosophy into Shī‘i theology in the thirteenth century by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 673/1274) and his pupil Ibn-al Muṭahhar al-Hillī (d. 726/1325), Shī‘i theology has maintained the freedom of the will, as has Māturīdian theology in contradistinction to Sunnī Ash‘arite theology.⁷⁰ Ironically this very same Magian theology that Iqbal is critical of is the one that preaches the freedom of the will!

Iqbal was unable to free himself from the Sufistic heritage. "His imagery, like that of most Turkish, Persian, or Urdu poets, is largely colored by Sufi symbolism: as much as he detested the kind of enthralling, "otherworldly" mysticism that he thought was hidden behind Ḥāfīz's beautiful verses, he himself used the whole fabric of Sufi imagery in his poetry, though he often re-interpreted it."⁷¹

Iqbal who is an exponent of the will refers to the will that must of its own freedom submit to the law (*shari‘ah*). The human will first submits then is transmuted by love and what he calls ego-sustaining acts. "Imān is not merely a passive belief in one or more propositions of a certain kind; it is a living assurance begotten of a rare experience. Strong personalities alone are capable of rising to this experience and the higher 'Fatalism' implied in it."⁷² This indeed is a very enlightening statement; it shows that Iqbal acknowledges that faith is based on mystic experience, and involves a transmutation of the will (which is what Sufism aspires to achieve). One may say that the injunction of adding "*inshallah*" (God-willing) when expressing an intention is indicative of this process. As the Muslims of Iqbal's times were steeped in fatalism, Iqbal takes 'poetic liberty' to re-establish the correct balance. As Sufism is the inner vital element of religion, it was necessary to free it from certain misconceptions that threatened to misguide conduct. "Conduct, which involves a decision of the ultimate fate of the agent cannot be based on illusions. A wrong concept misleads the understanding; a wrong deed degrades the whole man, and may eventually demolish the structure of the human ego."⁷³ For him therefore struggle and effort through ego-sustaining activity was concomitant to life; inactivity and inertness to dissipation and death.

Schimmel comes to the conclusion notes that "More than once Muḥammad Iqbal attacked the 'Pirism' and backwardness of the so-called 'spiritual leaders' of the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent; yet a

closer study of his work makes it clear that he himself follows quite closely the Sufi thought of the classical period."⁷⁴ One may say that he is not critical of the concept of annihilation *per se* which is a prelude to subsistence, but of its Buddhist/ Hindu version of complete dissipation of personality. Furthermore, one cannot say that he rejects the *wujūdī* doctrine in essence, but its intellectual pantheistic interpretation that was probably prevalent during his time. Iqbal's thought must be taken with reference to his time. He quotes Halīm Pāsha, whose view is that Islam after coming into contact with various cultures and religion needed to de-toxify itself.⁷⁵ Iqbal himself is of a similar view.⁷⁶

He divides religious life into three parts; i.e., 'Faith,' 'Thought,' and 'Discovery'⁷⁷ that may be seen as corresponding to 'Islam,' *imān* and '*iḥsān*.' It is in its third aspect that religion is given the unfortunate name of Mysticism.⁷⁸ This is the most important part of religious life for "it is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness, its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status."⁷⁹ However this domain itself was subject to the status quo that the Muslims found themselves in. The latter-day representatives of Sufism were applying methods ill-suited to modern man. In his view the need of the day was a method that was "physiologically less violent and psychologically more suitable to a concrete type of mind."⁸⁰ Like Shāh Walī Allāh and Sir Sayyid Aḥmad, he too called for a fresh interpretation of theology, keeping in view the modern trends of thought in science and philosophy. Sufism in his view was "essentially a system of verification- a spiritual method by which the ego realizes as fact what intellect has understood as theory."⁸¹ Iqbal would visit the shrines of saints to obtain their blessings; thus there is record of his visiting the shrines of Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī, Shāh Muḥammad Ghauth, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, Ḥakīm Sanā'ī and the shrine of the father of Shaykh al-Hujwīrī.⁸²

In the light of the above it would be justified to make the conclusion that Iqbal was not a critic of Sufism, but somewhat a Sufi himself. Dr. Khalīfah 'Abd al-Ḥakīm in his book *Fikr-i Iqbal* makes a similar observation. He points out that within Sufism; there are many Sufis who differ from each other in minor aspects. He examines different facets of Sufism and Iqbal's thought and comes to the conclusion that the same standards by which Rūmī is called a Sufi can be applied to Iqbal.⁸³ He points out that Iqbal has his own ideas of Sufism; he is thus a great admirer of Rūmī and yet a critic of Ibn al-'Arabī, (though in essence both have the same beliefs). Iqbal at times is full of praise for Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī.⁸⁴ He is however

critical of the outdated methods perpetuated by the Sufis of his day, he is critical of Persian mysticism, which makes a distinction between the phenomenal and the real, in the inner and the outer, and a mysticism that denies the *shari'ah* and claims to be esoteric. He favored a fresh interpretation of Islamic metaphysics that took due regard of the more recent developments in modern thought and wanted a revision of Sufi methods that were physiologically less violent and psychologically more suitable to modern concrete modes of thought;⁸⁵ such a Sufism would be closer to the original form of Islam and not its Persianised version.

Conclusion

Alhaq makes the claim that Iqbal started his career as a free thinker with "Sufi inclinations," then radically changed his position after his return from Europe.⁸⁶ Dates of publication of the works cited in this write-up do not support this claim. As demonstrated Iqbal at the beginning of his career considered mysticism as a system of verification⁸⁷ while towards the end of his career he emphasized the importance of mystic experience as the discovery of the ego of its ultimate nature. This experience is not a "conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact...that cannot be captured in the net of logical categories."⁸⁸ For him this experience is the product of an active engagement with ones environment rather than a withdrawal from it. It is the product of effort and struggle, of ego-sustaining activities rather than world-negation. It would therefore be more appropriate to maintain that Iqbal did not reject Sufism, but rather aimed at its reformation. This was due to the different need of the time. To examine his views out of the context of his times is to do an injustice to him.

Notes and References

- ¹ Shuja Alhaq, *A Forgotten Vision. A study of human spirituality in the light of the Islamic tradition* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1996), p. 89, hereafter cited as Alhaq, *Forgotten Vision*.
- ² Muhammad Iqbal, "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani," *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, September 1900, pp. 237-46, as cited Iqbal, *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 77-97, p. 78.
- ³ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, (Lahore: Bazm-i Iqbal, nd), pp. 83-89, hereafter Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics*.
- ⁴ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Secrets of the Self (Asrār-i Khudī)*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (Lahore: Farhan Publishers, 1977), p. xxiii-xxiv, hereafter Iqbal, *Asrār-i Khudī*.
- ⁵ Iqbal, "Islam and Mysticism," *The New Era*, Lucknow, 28 July 1917, pp. 250-51, as cited in *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 154-6, p. 154.
- ⁶ Akhtar Rāhī ed., *Iqbāl, Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī kī Nazar Maiñ* (Iqbal Seen through the Eyes of Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī), (Lahore: Bažm-i Iqbāl, 1978), p. 126, hereafter Akhtar Rāhī ed., *Iqbāl, Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī kī Nazar Maiñ*.

- ⁷ Sufism influenced by the doctrine of *wahdat-al wujud* or unity / oneness of being.
- ⁸ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, ed. and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1986), p. 143, hereafter cited as Iqbal, *Reconstruction*.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ¹⁰ Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics*, p. 83.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," *The Hindustan Review*, Allahabad, 1909, as cited in *Speeches Writings*, pp. 97-117, p. 101.
- ¹³ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 76.
- ¹⁴ Iqbal, "Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal," *The Hindustan Review*, Allahabad, 1909, as cited in *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 97-117, p. 102.
- ¹⁵ "Whatever may be the final fate of man it does not mean the loss of individuality." Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 93.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- ¹⁷ *Qur'an*, 5:35.
- ¹⁸ Iqbal, *Asrar-i Khudī*, pp. xxv-xxvii
- ¹⁹ Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics*, p. 87.
- ²⁰ Iqbal, "Islam and Mysticism," *The New Era*, Lucknow, 28 July 1917, pp. 250-51, as cited in *Speeches and Writings*, pp. 154-6, p. 154.
- ²¹ Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics*, p. 83.
- ²² Jāvaid Iqbāl, *Zindab Rūd (Living Stream)*, (Lahore: Ghulām 'Alī Publishers, 1983), pp. 219-220, hereafter Jāvaid Iqbāl, *Zindab Rūd*.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- ²⁴ Khalīfah 'Abd al-Ĥakīm, *Fikr-i Iqbāl (The Thought of Iqbāl)*, (Lahore: Baḏm-i Iqbāl, 1968), p. 417.
- ²⁵ *Qur'an*, 55:26-27.
- ²⁶ *Fān* as from *fanā* to vanish, *fāni* perishable, liable to decay *Dictionary and Glossary of the Ko-ran*, s.v. "*fanā*," John Penrice (England: Curzon Press, 1993), p. 112.
- ²⁷ *Yabqā*, *abqā* more or most lasting, enduring, permanent, second declension from *baqīyya* to remain that which remains or survives, permanent, constant. *Ibid.*, s.v. "*baqā*," p. 18.
- ²⁸ Junayd Baghdādī, as cited by Leonard Lewisohn, "In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the Tamhīdat of 'Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadhānī," pp. 285-336, *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Leonard Lewisohn, foreword by Javed Nurbakhshi, introduction by S. H. Nasr, (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), p. 302, hereafter *Classical Persian Sufism*.
- ²⁹ 'Alī B. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb (The Revelation of the Mystery)*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Pb., 1996), p. 243-6.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- ³¹ Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadhani, *Tamhīdat* 75, ed. by Afif Osseiran, Tehran, 1962, as cited by Leonard Lewisohn, "In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the Tamhīdat of 'Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadhānī," pp. 285-336, *Classical Persian Sufism*, p. 307.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 306.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 308
- ³⁴ *Qur'an*, xxvii: 34, as cited by Ayn al-Quḏāt, *Tamhīdat* 58, *ibid.*, p. 308.

- ³⁵ For details see *Kitāb al-Fanā* and *Kitāb al-Mūbāq* in Abdul Hassan Ali Kader, *Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd*, E. W. J. Gibb Memorial Series, New Series, XXII, (London: Luzac and Company Limited, 1962), p. 152 and 160.
- ³⁶ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 88.
- ³⁷ Iqbal, *Asrār-i Khudī*, v. 1334-1336, p. 98.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, v. 1389, p. 122.
- ³⁹ "Transmute thy handful of earth into gold, Kiss the threshold of a Perfect Man." Iqbal, *Asrār-i Khudī*, v. 340, p. 29.
- ⁴⁰ "It was by combining Spinoza with Kant's epistemology that Fichte, Schelling and Hegel reached their varied pantheisms; it was from *conatus sese preservandi*, the effort to preserve oneself, that Fichte's *Ich* was born, and Schopenhauer's "will to live," and Nietzsche's, "will to power," and Bergson's *elan vital*." Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (Rawalpindi: Services Book Club, 1985), p. 147.
- ⁴¹ Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, n.d.), p. 554.
- ⁴² Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 76.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87-88.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42-3.
- ⁴⁶ For example Burhān Ahmād Fārūqī writing in 1940 in his doctoral dissertation, translates *wahdat-i-wujūd* or *tawhīd-i-wujūdī* as the pantheistic conception of *tawhīd*. Accordingly he calls pantheism the doctrine of Islamic mystics called *Wahdat-i-Wujūd*. Burhan Ahmad Fārūqī, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhīd. Study of Shaikh Ahmed Sirhind's Doctrine of Unity* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989), pp. 1 and 31.
- ⁴⁷ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 85.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-18.
- ⁵¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, reprint ed. (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2003), p. 406, hereafter Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*.
- ⁵² Iqbal, "Islam and Mysticism," *The New Era*, Lucknow, 28 July 1917, pp. 250-51, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 155.
- ⁵³ Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, edited and introduction by Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2006), p. 103, hereafter Rahman, *Revival and Reform*.
- ⁵⁴ Iqbal, "Islam and Mysticism," *The New Era*, Lucknow, 28 July 1917, pp. 250-51, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 154.
- ⁵⁵ Jāvaīd Iqbāl, *Ẓindāh Rud*, pp. 228.
- ⁵⁶ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 31, and p. 122.
- ⁵⁷ W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London: Mac millan & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 239.
- ⁵⁸ "God alone exists and the world that is other than God is imaginary (*mutakabbayal*) and illusory (*manhūm*)."⁵⁸ Sirhindī, *Maktūbat*, letter no. 2: 98, trans. by Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Sbariah*, (London: Islamic Foundation, 1986), p. 293.
- ⁵⁹ In Iqbāl's view Ishrāqī Sufism is a reverting to Persian dualism. Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics*, p. 94.
- ⁶⁰ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 25.
- ⁶¹ *Qur'an*, 3: 97 and 29: 6, as cited *ibid.*, p. 45.

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- ⁶² Iqbal, *A Message from the East*, trans. M. Hadi Hussain (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), p. 132.
- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁶⁴ Alhaq, *Forgotten Vision*, p. 89.
- ⁶⁵ Iqbāl, cited in Akhtar Rāhī ed., *Iqbāl, Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī kī Nazar Main*, pp. 146-147.
- ⁶⁶ Jāvaīd Iqbāl, *Žindab Rūd*, p. 222.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 227.
- ⁶⁸ Iqbal, "Qadianis and Orthodox Muslims," pp. 197-203, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 198.
- ⁶⁹ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 77.
- ⁷⁰ Rahman, *Revival and Reform*, p. 66.
- ⁷¹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 406.
- ⁷² Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 87.
- ⁷³ Ibid., p. 146.
- ⁷⁴ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, p. 406.
- ⁷⁵ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 124.
- ⁷⁶ "Empire brought men belonging to earlier ascetic cultures, which Spengler describes as Magian, within the fold of Islam. The result was the conversion of Islam to a pre-Islamic creed with all the philosophical controversies of these creeds." Iqbal, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 87-88, as cited *ibid*, notes and references, p. 173.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 143.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 145 and p. xxi.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. xxi.
- ⁸¹ Iqbal, "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani," *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, September 1900, pp. 237-46, as cited in *Speeches and Writings*, p. 78.
- ⁸² Abū Saʿīd Nūr al-Dīn, *Islāmī Taṣawwuf aur Iqbāl (Islamic Sufism and Iqbāl)*, (Karachi: Iqbāl Academy, 1959), pp. 219-224.
- ⁸³ Khalīfah ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm, *Fikr-i Iqbāl*, p. 403.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 419.
- ⁸⁵ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. v.
- ⁸⁶ Alhaq, *Forgotten Vision*, p. 89.
- ⁸⁷ Iqbal, "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity as expounded by Abdul Karim al-Jilani," *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, September 1900, pp. 237-46, as cited in *Speeches and Writings*, p. 78.
- ⁸⁸ Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p. 145.

EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF
HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS: IQBAL'S
SYNTHESIS OF NEUROPHYSIOLOGY,
SPIRITUALITY, AND PHILOSOPHY

Dr. M. H. Qazi

ABSTRACT

This article is about Iqbal's views on ego, consciousness, self, space, and time, as presented in his *Reconstruction*. Iqbal distinguishes ego from the soul and rejects its identification as a rigid physical substance. The ego, he argues, operates with its own energy and interacts with time differently during life and after death. Central to Iqbal's thesis is the role of consciousness in understanding ego, which presents philosophical challenges for distinguishing between ego and consciousness. It is also described here that whether Iqbal's position aligns with dualism or monistic materialism, examining his views on Divine Time, space, and the relationship between matter and consciousness in light of modern physics and biology. Further, the discussion of neurons and their functions introduces a neurophysiological approach to consciousness, yet Iqbal distances himself from reductionist views, critiquing the limited scope of science in grasping reality. He argues that scientific observations are fragmentary and cannot fully capture the nature of consciousness, which is intertwined with both internal and external stimuli. The article also delves into Iqbal's understanding of time, distinguishing between serial time and Divine time, as well as between the efficient and appreciative self, offering a unique philosophical approach. His insights resonate with modern phenomenological ideas about inner and outer experiences and challenge reductionist science's approach to consciousness.

Ego, according to Iqbal, as we have seen, is not identical to soul in the sense in which it has been understood by the Mutakalimin. Nor is it a rigid substance occupying space like a physical object. He (ego) organizes all its acts through its own energy. His perception of time and the way it organizes his freedom, is in serial time with reference to the body and nature, but after death it enjoys the luxury of Divine Time and Divine Space. All actions of the ego are regulated, though freely, by the Directive Energy (Amr) infused ab initio at the time of fertilization of ovum by the sperm and subsequently by the accumulation of sub-egos, during embryonic development ultimately leading to the emergence of the final ego. The freedom, which the ego carries, is a deliberate act of the Ultimate Ego bestowed on man as the chosen one of God. This be so, Iqbal makes a categorical statement that it is only consciousness through which we can understand the nature of the ego. Given this approach adopted by Iqbal there are several aspects, irrespective of their soundness, which are likely to attract the attention of a concrete mind. First, whether Ego and Consciousness are two faces of the same coin? Suffice to reiterate at this stage that in our opinion, as the modern researches also show, it is difficult to distinguish between ego and consciousness on the basis of characteristics enumerated by Iqbal. We will present more evidences on this count when we deal with phenomenology. Second, we must clearly identify whether Iqbal's thesis on ego categorizes him amongst the dualists or monistic materialists or somewhere in between the two when he differentiates normal experience (experimentally verifiable) from spiritual experience (inner religious experience)? Third, whether the existence of Divine Time and Divine Space have any perceptual means for a human living in serial time? Again for the concrete mind under the spell of the world of physics, it is a fundamental issue. We will examine this as we proceed further in our discussion. Fourth, whether our concept of space and time based on Newton's laws of motion and gravity and that of Einstein's general theory of relativity which merges time with space as its fourth dimension, and states that neither time nor space are absolute, have any meaning for predication of the space of God from the perceptual space in the world in which we live? Fifth, what is the nature of matter in the

light of modern researches in physics and what bearing, if any, it has on such concepts as phenomenology as related to consciousness? Lastly, whether some aspects of biology and the complicated assemblies of neurons have some basis for consciousness? Certainly, for a student of religious psychology and that of natural sciences, these are penetrating questions, though difficult to answer, yet having a high bearing on our theme of inner religious experience (finite-infinite contact). We now proceed to address these questions relying on the information available from current literature.

But before doing so, let us dispose off mind-matter controversy. This controversy stems from several approaches which have been used for its resolution. Some of these approaches lend a powerful support to Monistic materialism and include, among others, behaviorism (William James),¹ functionalism, linguistics (Wittgenstein)², Qualia³, reductionism and phenomenology⁴. As compared to this, dualism stands its ground on the basis of equally powerful arguments.

Unlike the physicalists, Iqbal makes a clear distinction between the normal experience (which is verifiable, and which is entirely based on the theory of matter as advocated by physicalists, and inner religious experience, normally non-verifiable which because of its non-material nature is apparently a consequence of higher consciousness (ego). This brings Iqbal closer to Descartes' dualistic approach. Yet, there are a few differences which will be discussed as we expand the subject subsequently. For the present we will focus our attention on consciousness (ego) as understood by adherents of monistic materialism. To be able to appreciate their viewpoint, it is considered worthwhile that reader is briefly acquainted with the structure and function of the brain. This will give us a useful insight into the emergence of consciousness from the point of view of neurophysiologists and evolutionary biologists.

Essentially, the human brain during embryonic development as it grows at the front from the neural tube is divided into three distinct regions, the forebrain, the mid-brain and the hindbrain (fig. 1).

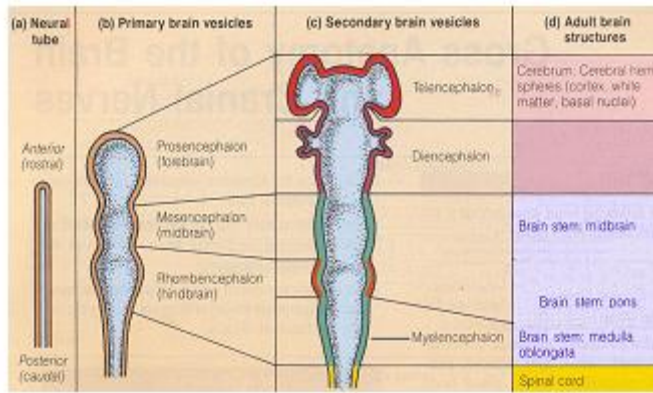


Figure 1: Embryonic development of human brain. The adult structures are derived from the neural tube shown in left column (a)

In a fully developed human brain, the forebrain constitutes the cerebral hemispheres (two, one left, one right), the thalamus and hypothalamus. The midbrain and hindbrain taken together constitute the brain stem consisting of medulla oblongata and pons enveloped by cerebral hemispheres. The cerebellum is an outgrowth from the midbrain seen behind the cerebral hemispheres. All parts of the brain are made up of nerve cells called neurons. Reference may be made to Fig 2 to get a mental picture of various parts of the brain.

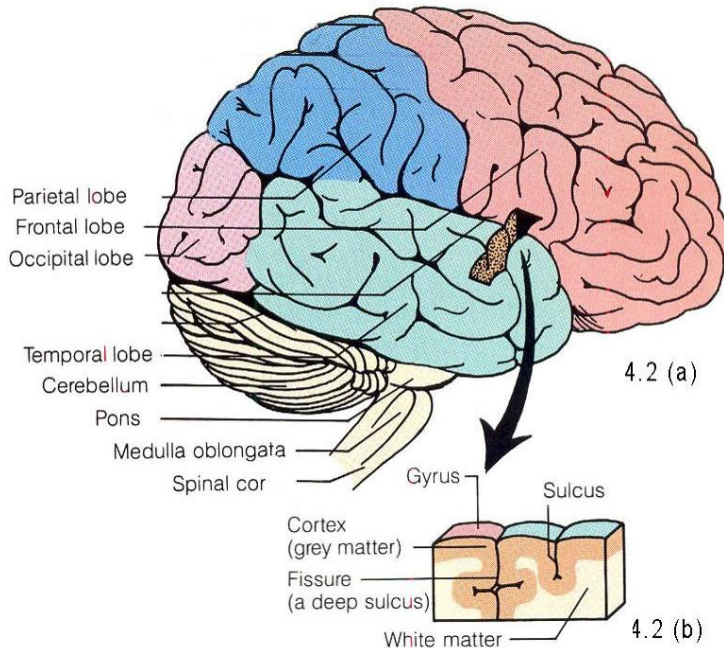


Figure 2 –(a) Right lateral view of the brain. Showing various areas of the brain; (b) a portion of microscopic structure of the cerebral cortex.

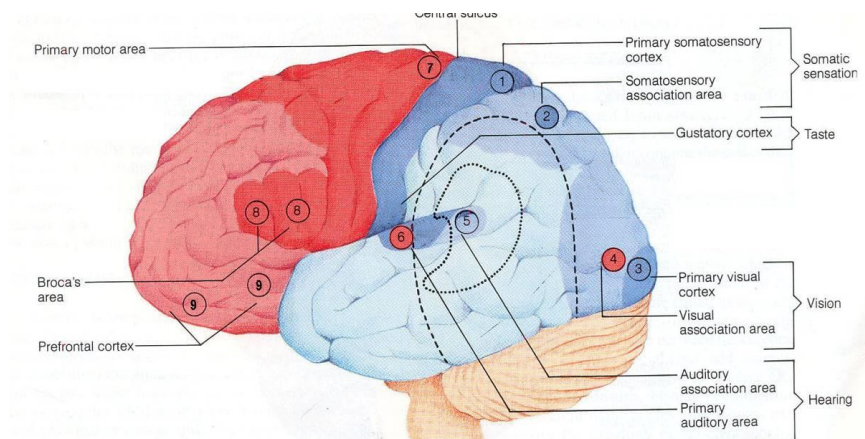


Figure 3: Functional areas of the left cerebral cortex.

The human species is characterized by evolutionary advancement of cerebral hemispheres which are larger in weight and volume (in proportion to its body) compared to any other animal species. The two hemispheres, right and left, are clearly separated from each other by a depression called longitudinal fissure. All over, on the surface of each hemisphere there are raised convoluted areas called Gyri (singular gyrus) and depressions called Sulci (singular sulcus). Each hemisphere is divisible in various lobes; namely (a) frontal in front; (b) temporal on the side; (c) the parietal in the middle on top and (d) occipital behind. Each lobe is the seat for designated functions as shown in figure 3

The designated functions for the right side of body are represented on the left hemisphere and those for the left are represented on the right hemisphere. The two hemispheres are bridged internally through nerve fibers, constituting what is known as the Corpus callosum. The inside of the hemispheres have cavities known as ventricles. These cavities and other cavities in various parts of the brain are interconnected and filled with a fluid called cerebrospinal fluid. The two hemispheres receive messages from inside and outside the body (the sensory messages, also called afferent), process them, and then send messages back for necessary action in accordance with the requirement of the message received. These returning messages calling for action are known as efferent (motor) messages. For our purpose we can note that the cerebral hemispheres are responsible for processing the afferent (incoming) and efferent (outgoing) messages. The walls of the cerebral hemispheres are constituted by two types of materials: the gray

matter outside and the white matter inside (figure 2b). It can be imagined that the cerebro-spinal fluid is in contact with inside of the white matter. Examine Fig 3 and note that primary somato-sensory area in the parietal lobe receives impulses from the body's sensory receptors (such as those for pressure, pain and temperature). Just behind this in the parietal lobe is located the somato sensory association area which analyses the messages received (afferent stimuli)—and producing awareness about pain, coldness, light, and touch, among others. The messages from other special sense organs are perceived in specific areas located in other lobes of the hemispheres. For example, the visual area (for the eye) is located in the occipital lobe, the auditory area (for the ear) is located in the temporal lobe, and the olfactory area is deep within the temporal lobe.

The primary motor area which is responsible for sending back messages to the body for required action is located in the frontal lobe. Located in the lower part of parietal lobe of left hemisphere is a small specialized area called Broca's area which organizes the articulation of words (speech). Furthermore, of particular importance for us is the prefrontal area in the frontal lobe which is involved in intellect, complex reasoning and personality. This area will be the focus of our attention when we will examine carefully its neurophysiology on the emergence of consciousness. Generally speaking, each hemisphere is a "specialist" in certain ways. For example, the left hemisphere is the "language brain" in most of us because it is associated with language skills and speech. The right hemisphere is more specifically concerned with abstract, conceptual or spatial processes – skills associated with artistic or creative pursuits. The cell bodies of all neurons involved in cerebral function are found only in the gray matter of the brain called the cerebral cortex. The white matter below is composed of nerve fibres only (Figure 2b).

Now refer to Fig 4 and examine two other important areas of the brain namely, *Diencephalons, the hind portion of the forebrain*, and the brain stem which belong to the midbrain and hindbrain. In diencephalons two very significant areas functionally stand out in human brain. These are (a) Thalamus and (b) hypothalamus. To the brain stem belong the pons and medulla oblongata, the cerebellum, another important functional area, is an outgrowth of the hindbrain. All these brain structure are constituted by nerve cells (neurons). An aggregation of neurons within the brain tissue is identified, as nucleus. Many such nuclei are present in various segments of the brain. For ease of simplicity we avoid examining them. However, we

will refer to them, if necessary, when we describe the neurophysiological basis of emergence of consciousness. Note that brain stem and other structures lie on the underside of the cerebral hemispheres almost covered by them and can thus be seen in a section of the brain cut from the middle from above downwards as seen in Fig 4.

Note: This Fig has already been inserted in the text on the same page as in the pre print.

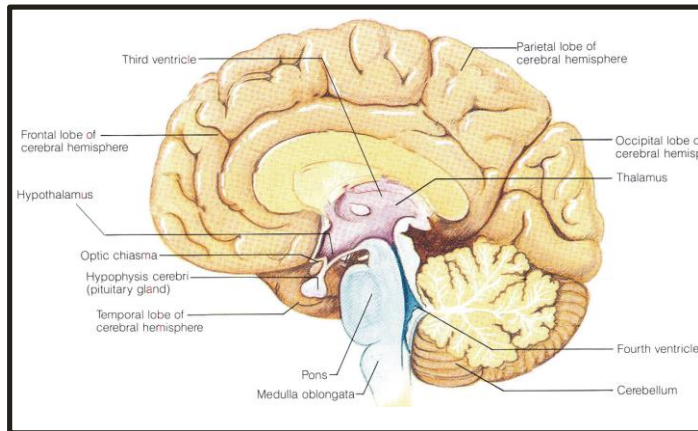


Figure 4 Section of the brain especially showing diencephalon and brain stem (adapted from Marieb, E. N. 1996).

The diencephalon though a part of forebrain occupies the front end of the brain stem. It consists of two large lobes of gray matter in thalamus. The two lobes are connected by a bunch of neurofibres. All information from sensory areas of the body is integrated through the thalamus and relayed to somato-sensory area in the cortex of hemispheres. Hypothalamus which lies below the thalamus, is involved in regulating the body temperature, water balance, metabolism, sex, hunger and thirst; sensory nerves (the optic nerves) which originate from the modified neurons in the eyes cross each other (coming one from the left eye and the other from the right) below the hypothalamus forming the optic chiasma. A relay station for olfaction (smell) is located in the mammillary bodies residing in the floor of hypothalamus.

Refer to Fig 4 again and trace the thalamus in the midbrain. At its back lies the hindbrain which comprises medulla oblongata and pons. The cerebellum is made up of outer cortical area of white matter (nerve fibres) like the cerebral hemisphere. The cerebellum is concerned with unconscious coordination of skeletal muscle activity, and control of balance and equilibrium. Nerve fibers from the

apparatus of inner ear, visual pathways, tendons and skeletal muscles etc., enter the cerebellum. In fact, then, the cerebellum presides over the state and position of body parts at all times. For example, imagine a tennis player, maintaining its varying posture and balance during a tennis game. Such activities are regulated by the cerebellum. Furthermore, we have already noted that all sensory inputs from within and outside the body are received and analyzed by the thalamus. A number of nuclei are present in the thalamus (we will not name them in order to make things easy). These nuclei on the one hand receive information from various sensory inputs and on the other hand are connected with the regions of the cerebral cortex in two way traffic through nerve fiber tracts. In essence, then, it can be stated that thalamus provides a coordinating function between the higher order sensory processing (cerebral cortex) and the sub cortical motor systems. The important point we are making is that thalamus existed prior to the evolution of cerebral cortex. Accordingly, assuming that evolutionary process has been at work for millions of years, we have no hesitation in concluding that the rise of new cerebral cortical system as a higher order integrative system continues to receive analyzed sensory information from the ancient sub-cortical structure, like thalamus and brain stem.

With this description of the brain we have cleared the way for understanding the emergence of consciousness as conceived by Physicalists and Biologist. Furthermore, the same description will be of help to a searching mind who would like to delve deep for a comprehension of any theory of consciousness. However, his understanding will be like a squandered sum of beads originally bound together by a string, unless he attains some knowledge of the units which came together in billions and constituted the matrix of the brain. These units are called nerve cells (or neurons). Man is born with a fixed number of billions of neurons with identical physiological functions, though the number of neurons which play active part in the rest of man's life is only about 25% of the neuronal cell mass of the brain. The question before us is - what is the structure and organization of a neuron and how it functions? We have already indicated that some neurons are sensory (receiving message from sense organs) while others are motor (sending messages to the body for appropriate action. Yet the structure of all neurons are identical.

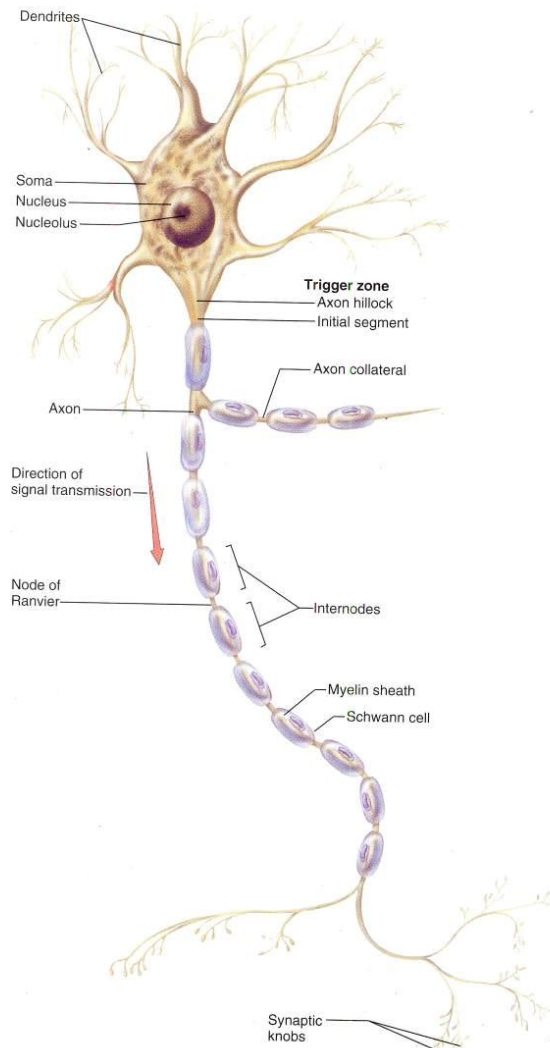


Figure 5- Typical structure of a neuron. Note the body of the cell, the dendrites and the axon

Examine the structure of a neuron as presented in Fig 5. Note (a) the cell body with a nucleus in the center; (b) a large number of tree like branches coming out of the cell body called dendrites; (c) a single long process, called axon, making contact with tree like branches of dendrites of another neuron; and (d) in cases where axon does not go on to make contact with dendrites, its tip branches off and makes contact with the muscle fibers. The message carried by the axon, let us say for contraction of a muscle is chemically passed on to the muscle along a gap between the point of contact of

the axon and the muscle. We are now able to understand that bundles of axons from modified neurons in sense organs of the body (eyes, ear, smell, touch etc.) make up what may be called sensory nerves. The bundle of axons from motor neurons of the brain (various parts) makes up what may be called motor nerves. Repeatedly we have used the word message or impulse. What does this mean and how is this impulse generated and propagated by the apparatus of a neuron? Indeed, as we know it today the whole process is electrochemical and electromagnetic. This is depicted in Fig 6. In simple words this may be described as follows: (For a larger image see end of the book)

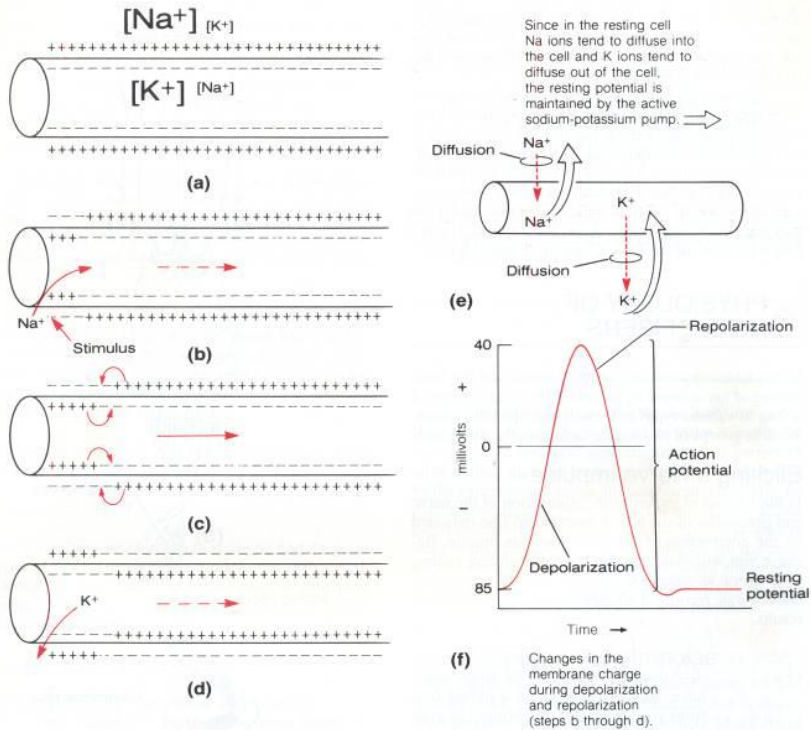


Fig. 4.6: Showing the physiology of nerve impulse

The nerve impulse. (a) Resting membrane potential (-85 mV). There is an excess of positive ions outside the cell, with Na^+ the predominant extracellular fluid ion and K^+ the predominant intracellular ion. The plasma membrane has a low permeability to Na^+ . (b) Depolarization—reversal of the resting potential. Application of a stimulus changes the membrane permeability, and Na^+ ions are allowed to diffuse rapidly into the cell. (c) Generation of the action potential or nerve impulse. If the stimulus is of adequate intensity, the depolarization wave spreads rapidly along the entire length of the membrane. (d) Repolarization—reestablishment of the resting potential. The negative charge on the internal plasma membrane surface and the positive charge on its external surface are reestablished by diffusion of K^+ ions out of the cell, proceeding in the same direction as in depolarization. (e) The original ionic concentrations of the resting state are restored by the sodium-potassium pump. (f) A tracing of an action potential.

Figure 6: Showing the Physiology of Nerve Impulse:

- (a) Resting Membrane potential (-85 mV). Note excess of positive Sodium Ions [Na⁺] outside and the excess of positive potassium [K⁺] Ions inside.
- (b) Depolarization which reverses the resting potential; Sodium Ions enter inside and action potential is initiated.
- (c) The resting potential is restored; behave Sodium goes out, and K⁺ comes in
- (d) A tracing of an action potectia

Stimulus is any thing which can bring about a change in *status quo*. Take for example the number of individual sparks (stimuli) triggered by the reading of this sentence at this moment, the neural impulses ignited by this book in the relevant neurons of the brain cannot be calculated. But we do know as to what is happening in each neuron - which for all intents and purposes for a neurophysiologist (or psychologist) is the smallest indivisible unit of consciousness and can help us appreciate the “beauty and complexity of summed up mechanics of the units of human consciousness (?) We may not necessarily agree with this. Let us now find out how this simple unit works? Examination of Fig 6 will show that the nerve fiber, and indeed the cell body of a neuron are bounded by a membrane identical in all types of cells. The membrane separates the inside of fiber from the outside. At rest (status quo) Potassium ions inside have high concentration but the electrical charge on the inside is negative. Correspondingly, the potassium ions have low concentration outside. Thus, according to law of diffusion these ions tend to move outside, but are stopped by electrical potential difference between inside and outside resulting in zero flow. At the same time the concentration of sodium ions is high on the outside compared to inside. These ions tend to move inside, but are prevented by the same electric potential difference (-65m volts). Now what happens when stimulus arrives at some point in an axon? The stimulus, if good enough in strength, changes the permeability for sodium ions at that point, opening what are called sodium gates in the membrane. Resultantly, sodium ions enter in an bring about change in the inside and outside charges on the membrane at that site of the stimulus; the inside becoming positive and the outside negative. The electric potential difference falls to -45 mv. In this way an electric wave is generated (see Fig 6). Since this is an electro chemical process, energy is generated and a stimulus is provided for further propagation of the nerve impulse. Two points should be noted. At the site left behind by the nerve impulse, the potassium ions again move in and sodium ions are pushed out. And are restored as in the resting state. Accordingly, *Status quo* is resumed; the electric potential again rising to -65 mv on the inside. Also the

propagation of nerve impulse is an all or none phenomenon, meaning that if the stimulus is weak, that is below the threshold, then, in spite of the presence of weak stimulus there will be no change in the permeability of the membrane and consequently there will be no nerve impulse. The rise of nerve impulse and its propagation only happen if the stimulus crosses the threshold.

This raises another important question. If one tree in a forest is put afire, not only the fire may spread to the whole tree, but may also set ablaze the whole forest. Now we know that there are billions of neuron having trillions of dendrites in the brain. Thus, like the forest, as one nerve cell is stimulated, many other cells are activated because of axon-dendrite connections. However, in practice this may not happen since at the branching points of the dendrites the stimulus may be stopped and may not be allowed to pass into the body of the cell and onward to the axon of the cell. This mechanism is of special interest to us for exploring the theory of consciousness based on neurophysiological approaches.

The process can be best described in the words of Pico (2000). "All sensory realities are based upon cellular functions (of neurons) where physics of matter and energy become the biology of nerve impulses and neurotransmission." This is a straightforward materialistic view point, which recognizes the transformation from physical to the biological. If this line of argument is pursued then, there is little we can present for a further transformation of biological to spiritual, a subject which received highest attention from Iqbal in *the Reconstruction*. However, to be able to stay with Iqbal we need to explore further the properties of a neuron, the unit of consciousness, so that we can locate a genuine basis, if any, about the mechanism involved in the proposed contact of the finite with the infinite. This is problematic, but not without rationale. The difficulty however is that even at this time, the search for knowledge and understanding of the biological universe, its operational manual and secrets – are not fully known: For instance, we do not know about the absolute basic code of information transmission from neuron to neuron in the nervous system. We do not know the full set of computational rules that operate in a single neuron or a network of neurons. We do not know exactly if, where, and how the nervous system represents the external and internal environments. Does it happen in the same way as the electromechanical circuits and mathematical equations, expressed together in computer simulation? In our opinion, the physics and mathematics of computing are all man made constructs and are far removed from the complexities of information processing in biological systems like the neurons and the

neural networks. We have, therefore, no hesitation in making a statement that we, as yet, are far removed from a further understanding of mathematical operations-the algorithms, of the nervous system. A computer scientist may be proud of creating a binary code (0/1) which through a series of basic state transitions can solve both simple and complicated mathematical problems, yet no such code, as we know, is applicable to the non-linear mathematical computations taking place during the stimulation of a neuron. How do the neurons then function? And what is the basis on which the code, computes the representations resulting from sensory stimuli? Shanon and Weaver (1949)⁵ and Weiner (1948)⁶ have suggested that “information is present in any system in which entropy and order change, from quantum states to biological events, to the electronic circuits of computer systems to neural networks”. On the face of it, this statement may be of considerable importance. However, there is a wide conceptual gap between the digitized mathematical computations by trillion of binary operations performed by computers and the computational process in the synaptic zones of the nervous systems. Essentially, the difference lies in the fact that a single neuron is performing a spatiotemporal integration of each stimulus moment which may or may not result in generation of action potential. This explains as to how we impose our concept of computation on a nerve cell function. Interestingly enough, computation by a single cell and computation by a neural network may or may not follow the same set of operational rules. *This be so, and as Pico (2000) has remarked:*

Hype, hope and illusion must be understood and respectfully separated from insight if we are to make progress in our efforts to reveal the neural computational code.

The issue we have raised about the computational process residing in a neuron and a neural network are germane to exploring our understanding of the nature of religious experience as predicated by Iqbal from the mystic experience of great Sufis of Islam. In fact, even in the prevailing state of our knowledge, one must yield to the impression that “it is only recently that we have begun to understand and conceive the nervous system as the substrate of computation and behavior. We are limited and humbled, in our understanding of the basics of neural function when we begin to speak of such thing.... This is not a sad state of affairs, as the nervous system is the most complex biological system known. It is mere an indication of how much more we have to discover, how much more beauty and excitement holds for the interested” (Pico, 2000)⁷. Are we, then, standing at the same level of conceptualization of inner religious

experience as in 1930 when Iqbal presented his discourses in *the Reconstruction*. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. This we will examine as we develop the subject further for the appreciation of the concrete mind. Indeed, for this purpose we have to come to terms with genetic code which resides in the deoxyribose neuclaic acid (DNA) expressing itself differently in different cellular groups. On this count, it is enough to point out that behavioral activity exhibited by a sum of cells in a house fly is not identical with the behavioral activity exhibited by a sum of cells in a pigeon. The difference lies in the evolutionary scale of DNA and much expanded neural networks in the pigeon, let alone man in which it reaches new heights of complexity with an underpinning for the rise of consciousness.

So much for the functional operation of a neuron, and to some extent of the neural networks. We will now present a brief account of sensory and motor inputs and outputs to which a cursory reference has already been made earlier. The sensory inflow reaches the brain through sensory nerves from the ear (auditory), eye (visual) nose (olfactory), tongue and digestive system (gustatory) and chemical, mechanical and thermal receptors from the body (somato sensory). The later sensory tracts travel along the spinal cord and in the main enter the brain stem. Thalamus is the major site where the sensory stimuli are received in its various nuclei. The thalamus, through various tracts is in a two way contact with the cerebral cortex (neocortex). It should be of interest to the reader that thalamus is the ancient brain. In animals without a cortex, the thalamus performed both sensory and motor functions. However, as the cerebral cortex evolved, the thalamus was made subservient to the higher order control exercised by the cerebral cortex. We have already noted the map of motor and sensory areas in the cortical lobes of the cerebral hemispheres. At this stage, further description of thalamus is beyond our scope. However, two areas of the thalamus, namely, the hippocampus and subiculum must be kept in sight because of the significant role they play in the overall memory system operating in the brain. Through these areas, the thalamus maintains a two-way traffic with the prefrontal cortex to be discussed soon. But first we will have a look at the cellular composition of the neocortex in which the cells are arranged in six layers (Fig. 6).

Thousands, then millions, then tens of millions of neurons form the cortex. The basic six layers of neo-cortex are in place by the sixth month of foetal development. Cells in various layers are organized to perform sensory or motor functions as dictated by the messages received from thalamus and other parts of the brain. For example, afferent (sensory) messages brought from thalamic nuclei form very

dense synaptic zones in layer III, but layers I and III also receive information from other neocortical areas. Efferent (motor) axons emerge from layer II and III. Similarly axons from layer III are projected into the thalamus. Apart from this, it must be mentioned that fibres from thalamus ascend virtually to all parts of neocortex. This holistic picture of inter connectivity between thalamus and neocortex along sensory and motor pathways not only illustrates the complexity of neural networks, but also illuminates the evolutionary stairway of consciousness which, according to Iqbal, is subservient to the Directive Energy of God from conception through human development.

Now we are left with one more area of the neocortex, namely the prefrontal integration module (PIM) which is known to be associated invariably with the emergence of consciousness. Fig. 7 shows the inflow of messages to and from the PIM. For a physicalist the neurobiological model (as proposed) of consciousness rests upon the foundation of structure-function relationship. Thus, corner stone of this foundation is the prefrontal integration module (PIM). This module is supposed to undertake physical computational function (integration). In structure it resembles the design of neocortex. The difficulty though is that so far we have not been able to define the exact dimensions, cellular components, synaptic patterns, informational content or specific biomathematical operations performed in the PIM.

The operational process may therefore at best be considered as a “heuristic construct”. One PIM is present in each prefrontal lobe of the two hemispheres and as indicated above, informational products from various parts of the brain converge upon PIMs (Fig 7). The biologists consider it as a “*Living, structured, multi modal information space and that it is a location where the other two multi modal representation, constructed in parietal, and frontal cortical lobe and in the hippocampus systems may be further transformed into even higher order representation.*” Now after due analysis, the apparent output from each PIM disseminates this representation to other regions of the cortex and to entire neural axis. It is important to note that the information which

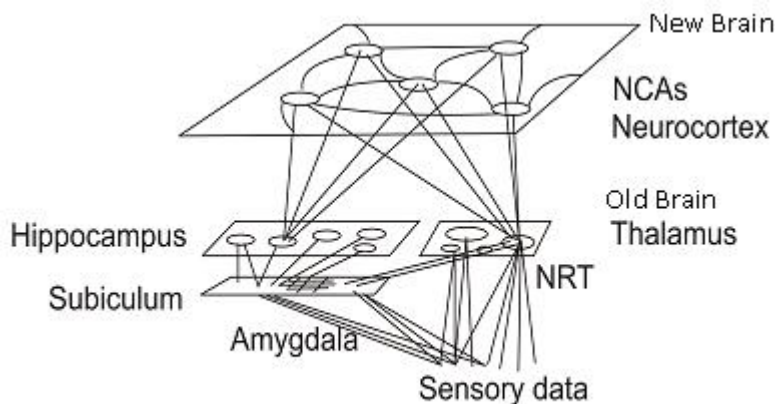


Figure 7- Inflow and outflow of messages from the outside world into and out of two strata of the brain namely thalamus (the old brain) below and cerebral cortex (the new brain) above.

converges upon the PIM includes (a) representation of all external unimodal and multimodal and internal stimuli from the sensory worlds; (b) representation of the real time spatial environment; (c) representation of the recent and distant past sensory movements (memories) and (d) the timing and coordinating influence of the thalamus. Furthermore, the efferent fibres (motor) that arise from various sites of PIM include (a) cortical fibres to adjacent PIM; (b) Fibres connecting the PIMs in the two hemispheres; (c) projections to neocortical regions; (d) projections to hippocampal areas; (e) projections to memory system cortical areas; projections to thalamic nuclei, (basal ganglia and amygdala and several descending tracts).

In summary, then, it can be concluded that “it is in the PIM that we see the most complete representation of the sensory worlds, the ultimate point representation that can be achieved by nervous system computation, the most comprehensive binding in time of two dimensional (2D) and three dimensional (3D) stimulus information possible. (Pico: 2000)⁸.”

The same author has reduced the whole concept into a simplified mathematical equation. In sum, the computations performed in the synaptic field of PIM (a region of electrochemical and electrogenetic, graded current flows) is proposed to be an integral function (see also Hebb, 2001)^{8a} created by the biophysical structure of the sustaining cellular and extracellular system of organic brain. Importantly enough, it must be emphasized again that in the model suggested, “the biophysical methods by which the brain derives information from sensory processing may be radically different from the many theories that relate the brain’s operations to those of electric circuits, computers or point-to-point so called neural networks. How embarrassing for a student of physics and a philosophic reductionist. Needless to say that there exists something higher than presently established laws of physics, or even the advanced approaches of

psychology. Keeping in view the perspective of Iqbal's concept of inner religious experience, suffice to say at this stage that even from the pure physicalists point of view there is considerable room for moving in this direction (see, for example, Popper and Eccles, 1972)⁹, keeping also in view *that the functional consequence of PIM activity may be seen as reinforcement or inhibition of ongoing behavioral and homeostatic activities, in addition to its contribution to the memory system* (Pico, 2000)¹⁰.

We close this discussion with a statement that thoughts and consciousness are linked in tandem. In the state of consciousness PIM produces thoughts encoded in axon systems that reach the other PIM, creating a time sequence within the PIMS. Whereas, the representations of the sensory world drive the computational model, the indivisible temporal dimension of consciousness is embedded therein. The infinite variation of thoughts in a way is associated with experience and thrown back into memory by the PIMS as unique to the past, present and future of consciousness. Still the caveat remains, for instance of space-time in the serial and Divine modes. This may call for a different frame of reference. A reference to which Iqbal alludes to repeatedly in his discourses.

Having dealt with brain with some understanding of the structure and function of neurons and neural networks, we now proceed to examine in some detail approaches to consciousness which have emerged during the last century. First, we will explore the scientific and philosophical basis of consciousness and then follow it up with its psychic dimensions which have been of intense interest to spiritualists and mystics (as is the case with Iqbal. See also, for example, Forman (1994)¹¹). However, at the outset we will like to draw the attention of the reader to the confusing use of terminology dealing with the central theme of consciousness. For instance, one may find the use of such terms as mind, cognitive system, system of mental states, psyche, soul, ego and consciousness. Yet, their overlap of meaning cannot be overlooked.

Having developed the neurophysiological basis for the functions of the brain in the preceding sections for the concrete mind we are now in a position to take up Iqbal's views on time, space and consciousness. Since consciousness has been a subject of extensive research during the last few decades, it will be of interest to discuss the new information in the context of Iqbal's vision as presented in *the Reconstruction*. To begin with, let us find out how Iqbal weaves a golden fabric studded with glittering jewels through a well coordinated array of ideas, thoughts, logic and metaphysical acumen. In his discourse on "The Philosophical Test of the Revelations of Religious Experience", Iqbal makes a beautiful presentation on the

genesis of various levels of experience including consciousness in the following words:¹²

Passing now to other levels of experience – life and consciousness, consciousness may be imagined as a *deflection from life*. Its function is to provide a luminous point in order to enlighten the forward rush of life. It is a case of tension, a state of self-consciousness, by means of which life manages to shut out all memories and associations which have no bearing on a present action. It has no well-defined fringes; it shrinks and expands as the occasion demands. *To describe it as an epiphenomenon of the process of matter is to deny it (as having) an independent activity, and (thus) to deny the validity of all knowledge which is only a systematized expression of consciousness.* Thus consciousness is a purely spiritual experience of life which is not a *substance*, but an organizing principle, a specific mode of behavior essentially different to the behavior of an externally worked machine. *Since, however, we cannot conceive of a purely spiritual energy, except in association with a definite combination of sensible elements through which it reveals itself,* we are apt to take this combination as the ultimate ground of spiritual energy.

In the above quoted passage, Iqbal makes a few intriguing statements which call for an in-depth analysis. **First**, Iqbal does not accept that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of the process of matter, which denies it an independent activity. Soon we will argue about this in the context of recent literature on phenomenology. **Second**, that knowledge *per se* is a systematized expression of consciousness. **Third**, that consciousness is not a substance. It is a purely spiritual experience, and is simply an organizing principle. **Fourth**, since consciousness as spiritual energy is difficult to conceive of a concrete mind, it can only be legitimized in “association with a definite combination of sensible element through which it reveals itself. **Fifth**, the conclusion is drawn that the combination of the spiritual energy with sensible elements can be taken as ‘ultimate ground of spiritual energy’. Thus, taken together, the arguments advanced are illuminating, though difficult for a concrete mind to assimilate. Furthermore, by denying that consciousness is not an epiphenomenon of matter, Iqbal rightly distances himself from the proponents of monistic materialism; notwithstanding the fact that he identifies sensible elements (sense perception), for example, the neural networks and organized structure of the brain which in combination with sense organs constitute the substrate of consciousness. This position brings him somewhat closer to Descartes, who talked about the mysterious connection between mind and body (though for Iqbal soul is nonmaterial). This we believe places him amongst the dualists? However, more exciting is the conclusion that combination of

“consciousness” and sensible elements can be taken as a ground for spiritual energy. Earlier, we have built up arguments on the strength of Iqbal’s distinct differentiation between “Khalq” (creation) and “Amr” (Directive Energy). In line with that we maintain that in the above paragraph it would have been more appropriate, for reasons of intellectual consistency, that the word Directive Energy should have been used in place of spiritual energy. It may be recalled that earlier we have taken refuge under the umbrella of Directive Energy when we were describing the emergence of ego (consciousness) or even sub-egos. In our opinion, experience, memory and thought are a compact of consciousness (ego). Accordingly, experience whether spiritual (so called non verifiable) or non spiritual (verifiable) remains experience as a part of the same compact. Accordingly, spiritual experience cannot be considered in isolation simply because of its alleged non verifiability scientifically, which by and large is a consequence of human limitations. This also does not mean that one has to fall necessarily in the trap of monistic materialism. This brief critique on the paragraph cited, in no way, is meant to lessen the importance of Iqbal’s thoughts on consciousness. Nor an attempt to nullify its significance. If anything, we intend to amplify the same so that the concrete mind, which, as Iqbal desired, should be able to get a fuller appreciation of the process involved in experience – consciousness relationship. May be for this purpose we have to move away from metaphysics and take shelter under the biophysics of the brain.

Iqbal certainly distances himself from reductionists and does not subscribe to the view that the discoveries of Newton in the sphere of matter and energy and those of Darwin (1859) in the sphere of natural history reveal a mechanism based on physics, energy and atoms with self-existing properties. On this count Iqbal rightly conceives that reductionists have no respect for spiritualism, because of their sole reliance on reality as revealed by science. Indeed, on the question of arriving at reality through scientific observation and experimentation, Iqbal submits it to a critical analysis. For him, and rightly so, “what is called science is not a single systematic reality. It is a mass of sectional views of Reality – fragments of a total experience which do not seem to fit together. Natural science deals with matter, life and mind; but the moment you ask the question how matter, life and mind are mutually related, you begin to see the sectional character of the various sciences.” Nothing could be farther from truth as the above statement depicts. What to speak of other sciences, even in physics, so far attempts to develop a unified theory for resolving the dilemma between the classical physics and quantum

physics have met with little success. The string theory proposed by modern physicists is only a beginning in that direction. We have already argued elsewhere that in relation to consciousness, cause, which, according to physicalists, is prior to effect, takes a different “garb of end and purpose.” The last two act from within unlike “the cause which is external to the effect.” The position taken by Iqbal, however, does not in any way deny the response of the body to external stimuli. Yet, it gives a new meaning to consciousness responding to both internal and external stimuli. This line of thought is consistent with the idea explored by Iqbal that ego (consciousness) reveals itself in “combination with sensible elements.” What happens and how it operates when detached from the body at the time of death is a subject related to the immortality of the ego (consciousness) which we do not intend to bring into discussion at this stage.

Another feature of consciousness on which we will place high emphasis in expanding Iqbal’s theory of religious experience is described by him in the following words:

It is a case of tension, a state of self consciousness, by means of which life manages to shut off all memories and associations which have no bearing on the present action.

We are amazed at the clarity and ingenuity with which Iqbal has isolated the periods of ego isolated from the sensible world (somato sensory) for the purpose of an end which it finds in the infinite. When he wrote these words, neither neurophysiological nor physical basis were available to support this contention. However, we now stand at a different pedestal. The new advances in psychology made in the last couple of decades throw a fresh light within the frame of reference exercised by consciousness (ego). How? We will expand it subsequently using a set of evidences drawn from adherents to monastic materialism and dualism. Suffice to refer at this stage to a quote from Alwyn Scott (1995)¹³ that

Throughout the past century, the chasm between details of mechanistic explanation of the brain and the ever present reality of conscious awareness has continued to yawn. Whatever mechanistic explanation one might construct to explain the nature of mind (consciousness, ego?) one can well imagine the same mechanism working without the feeling (sensitivity). Reductive materialism fails to bridge the gap.

Let us now take a brief plunge into the relationship between consciousness and time as conceived by Iqbal. We have already dealt with serial time and to a limited extent, with Divine time as well. The observation of Iqbal that “conscious experience means life in time”, gives new dimension to our frame of reference in consciousness of what he calls the movement of self from center-outwards. On this

basis he identified two aspects of self, namely, the appreciative and efficient. The efficient self interacts with the “world of space” and is the one invariably appreciated by psychologists (the practical self of daily life). In this format it “discloses itself as nothing more than a series of specific and consequently numerable states.” This leads him to the conclusion that in this relationship with the outside, self lives in serial “time” which we predicate as long and short and which forms the fourth dimension of space. On the other hand appreciative self which reveals itself “in the moments of profound meditation, when the efficient self is held in abeyance (and) that we sink into our deeper self and reach the inner center of experience. In the life process of this deeper ego (consciousness) the states of consciousness melts into each other.” In making this distinction between efficient self and appreciative self, on very legitimate grounds, Iqbal presents a unique approach which has no parallel in the history of scholastic philosophy. However, it is only recently that Barry Daiton (2000)¹⁴ in agreement with Iqbal’s thoughts has drawn attention to the distinction between inner and outer experiences in the following words:

By outer experience I mean sensory experience (efficient self of Iqbal), the experiences of the surrounding world our sense organs give us, the deliverances of sight, touch, taste and smell. The realm of inner experience includes all forms of consciousness that seem to be located within our bodies – (certainly), the range of experiences that seem to occur within our head, those which we take to be most intimately associated with our minds (conscious thinking).

Further, the depth of Iqbal’s insight becomes obvious when he observes that “the unity of appreciative ego (self consciousness) is like the *unity of the term in which the experiences of its individual ancestors exist*, not as plurality but as a unity in which every experience permeates the whole”. This beautiful expression has been interpreted by us previously when we evoked the biological principles of ontogeny repeating phylogeny during development, notwithstanding the fact that the process continues throughout life; its abode being the appreciative self in which serial time is “Pulverized into a series of now – a pure duration unadulterated by space.” This may have sound metaphysical basis; yet, it will not be surprising if it is challenged on scientific grounds which seeks verification of every postulate in spite of its sectional nature in grasping reality piece-meal. Happily, however, this view of Iqbal is supported by an indefatigable modern philosophical idealist, Ruth Nanda Anshen and we quote from her: “what has natural science to do with consciousness? In the first place science should recognize its limitations. It cannot, for example, examine the numenon (object of intellectual intuition

devoid of all phenomenal attributes) through its scientific methodology. Since science is concerned exclusively with the phenomena, science is inevitably reductionist. Science should become more humble The program of science is the correlation of cause and effect (instead of purpose and end as proposed by Iqbal), and as such no examination of consciousness is possible for science.”

The exploration of human consciousness has long intrigued scholars across various disciplines. In the modern context, scientific advancements in neurophysiology provide insights into the physical workings of the brain and its relationship with consciousness. However, this scientific lens often limits understanding to the material aspects of human existence. In contrast, the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of consciousness, particularly those explored by thinkers such as Allama Muhammad Iqbal, offer a broader and more integrated perspective. Iqbal’s philosophical work, particularly in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, attempts to synthesize spirituality, philosophy, and the emerging sciences of his time, such as neurophysiology. He proposed that understanding consciousness requires going beyond the empirical study of the brain to embrace the metaphysical and spiritual realities that give depth and meaning to human experience. His synthesis suggests that human consciousness is not merely the product of biochemical processes but is deeply tied to spiritual evolution and intellectual development.

Iqbal’s synthesis of neurophysiology, spirituality, and philosophy offers a comprehensive understanding of human consciousness. It acknowledges the significance of modern scientific insights while highlighting the importance of spiritual and metaphysical dimensions. Iqbal’s exploration challenges the reductionist views that limit consciousness to mere physical processes, presenting instead a vision where the human mind and soul are in constant evolution, striving towards the Divine. His work remains relevant in contemporary discussions on consciousness, inspiring a balanced integration of science and spirituality to explore the full dimensions of human existence.

Notes and Reference

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- ² Wittgenstein, L., *Philosophical Investigation*, translated by G.E.M., Anscombe, Mc-Millan, New York, 1968.
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- ¹² Iqbal, M., *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Edited by M., Saeed Shaikh, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore 2003: Page 33.
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- ¹⁴ Dainton, B., *op. cit.*, Page, 29.

DYNAMIC APPLICATION OF
THOUGHTFUL INTELLIGENCE-A
TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO
MINDSET TRAINING

Dr. Musarrat Jabeen

ABSTRACT

The article delves into the profound relationship between intentions and actions, as exemplified by the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the personal experience of Khizra, who navigated the ethical complexities of child labor while training Hussain, a young boy, in household chores and educational pursuits. While initially employing Hussain could be seen as child labor, Khizra's thoughtful approach resulted in an empowering experience for both her family and Hussain. Over fourteen years, Hussain not only acquired formal education but also valuable life skills, evolving into a morally upright and skilled individual. The article further explores the concept of thoughtful intelligence—a higher order of thinking that integrates intention, moral clarity, and practical action. Thoughtful intelligence is proposed as a transformative tool for mindset training, focusing on the long-term impact of decisions across time and space. It emphasizes the development of moral values, self-awareness, and social responsibility. Drawing from multiple intelligences (social, emotional, moral, and ethical), the article argues that thoughtful intelligence can be cultivated to resolve complex social issues, like child labor, by fostering both individual and collective growth. The concept of thoughtful intelligence is framed as a dynamic process that shapes not only individual lives but also the broader social fabric. Through practical examples and theoretical insights, the article highlights how thoughtful intelligence works to harmonize the moral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of human existence, ultimately contributing to societal progress. The narrative intertwines Khizra's personal journey, philosophical reflections, and ethical considerations to propose thoughtful intelligence as a powerful mechanism for social transformation and personal growth.

رسول الله خاتم النبيين صلى الله عليه وعلى آله (The Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) says: (واصحابه وسلم

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Indeed there is relationship between intentions and actions.¹

To elaborate the concept we start the discussion with a narration. Khizra was writing her M. Phil thesis in 1998 with a sub focus on child labor. Hussain a boy of nine years was introduced to her to help in household chores because she had to care for her daughter born in 1997 and a son born in 1998. In one view, it was of course child labor; Khizra should not have chosen Hussain to serve.

At once she got hooked to another thought. The parents of Hussain were not able to pay for his education. Khizra was unable to offer him free education and space. Hussain desired both as he was from the countryside. Khizra was in great need of a helping hand. She chose Hussain to manage the house chores in the morning, so she could study. In the evening Hussain was able to attend school. He passed grade 5 (primary school education) and qualified middle school education as well. He was called Hussain Bhai by the children; his meal plate was always equal to the children's meal plate. Khizra always ensured that he got eight hours of sleep daily. He was offered a monthly salary that his parents could prosper. He enjoyed T. V entertainment with the children. He became Quran and computer literate. He also got the opportunity in Abbottabad to learn Karate with Khizra's children, once her husband was posted there. He earned a 'green belt' (a level in karate). Khizra's mother taught Hussain the skills to make jams and pickles. He became a very good cook. Later on, he learned how to tailor gents' clothes. With all this he was encouraged to learn the skills of automobile repairs. In 2010 after fourteen years of service to Khizra, he was able to earn 25000 rupees per month, equaling the salary of a research assistant in any public sector university of Pakistan. Hussain had an excellent sense of *honesty, loyalty, cleanliness, sobriety, piety, and patience*. Khizra believes that her children's growth with Hussain was a blessing from 1997 to 2010.

This day, Khizra counts the results of her *thoughtful intelligence to train the mind-set*² regarding social issue of child labor and its practical management, the fulfillment of Hussain's, Khizra's and her children's education and moral training in a family institution to enhance profitability in the system of humanity.

Khizra's mentor Qareeb says that the thoughtful mind-set has more power than hands: hands grasp the material, but the mind-set changes it.

Every civilization depends upon the quality of individuals it produces.

Frank Herbert (American fiction writer, 1920-86)

Thoughtfulness is the capacity to show understanding of what impact any act or word has on other peoples and refraining from it if one feels the impact will be negative. This also includes making an effort to do it if the impact is to be positive.³

Human intelligence has been defined as one's capacity for logic, understanding, self awareness, learning, planning, creativity, and problem solving. It can be more generally described as the ability or inclination to perceive or deduce information, and to train it as knowledge to be applied towards adaptive behaviors within an environment or a context. "Intelligence is the whole of cognitive or intellectual abilities required to obtain knowledge, and to use that knowledge in a good way to solve problems that have a well described goal and structure."⁴ Kutz⁵ said that intelligence is the ability comprised of brainpower and aptitude to comprehend; and profit from thinking. Intelligence delineates the thinking/learning capacity of an individual. Intelligence is the ability to assimilate the knowledge into practice.

Thoughtful intelligence is the higher order of thinking to train the mind-set to produce intention and actions. Thoughtful intelligence can be struggled for and acquired. It comprises of capacity to understand and realize the impact of one's thoughts, words and actions on the survival, dignity⁶ and development of individuals, groups and nations. The impact can be realized in 'Time' (for how many days, weeks, months or years the impact will continue) and 'Space' (for how far geographical land with or without human beings will be effected). It establishes thoughtful thoughts. Per the inner paradigm⁷: Thoughtful intelligence establishes and defends moral values in the individual against internal and external threats. This defense includes detection, prevention and response to threats through the use of moral beliefs, values, rules and practices. Thoughtful intelligence visions the eyes to observe and gives the courage⁸ to understand befittingly suited to difficult times; and reveals compassion⁹ for moral development.

The individual is socially constructed. He or She expresses demand and supply of moral values in regulating and disposing of behavior in personal and public paradigms. Its acquisition and application becomes complex as it is tied to the below eleven questions. The individual's mind-set training has a collective aspect

as well because it contributes to collective construction of the society. The collective aspect enables the community as a whole to benefit from individual construction. There must be an appropriate balance between the individual and collective aspects.

1. What is the relationship of the individual to the concepts of time and space?
2. What are the *moral values*¹⁰ of the individual?
3. What are the *internal* threats¹¹ to the moral values of the individual?
4. What are the *external* threats¹² to the moral values of the individual?
5. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the past, present and future?
6. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *natural environment*¹³?
7. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *social environment*¹⁴?
8. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *economic environment*¹⁵?
9. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *political environment*¹⁶?
10. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *judicial behavioral environment*¹⁷?
11. How does the individual thinks and practices the relationship to the *community, province, and state he or she belongs*?

Exercise

How many of the above questions do you realize in your being?

I. Relatives of thoughtful intelligence

Studying thoughtful intelligence means establishing individual potential in the production of moral development. There is hardly any work on thoughtful intelligence. But the study may utilize the contiguous literature regarding, social intelligence, multiple intelligence, emotional intelligence, moral intelligence and ethical intelligence.

In 1920, for instance, E.L. Thorndike¹⁸ described “*social intelligence*” as the skill of understanding and managing others.

In 1983 Gardner¹⁹ introduced his theory of “*multiple intelligence*” in his book, ‘*Frames of Mind*’, which is known as systematic, multidisciplinary and scientific depicted from psychology, biology, sociology and the arts & humanities. According to Gardner²⁰, intelligence is much more than ‘Intelligence quotient’ (IQ) because a high IQ in the absence of productivity does not equate to intelligence. In this description, “Intelligence is a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture²¹.” Gardner also favors gathering ethnographic data and cross-cultural information to see intelligence in action and in context. Following this description it can be assumed that the decision makers try to perform in regards to their distinctive capacity and situation. “Monopoly of those who believe in a single general intelligence has come to an end²².” He emphasized that there are at least seven ways (intelligences) that people understand and perceive the world. Gardner lists the following:

- Linguistic: the ability to use spoken or written words.
- Logical-mathematical: inductive and deductive thinking and reasoning abilities (logic, as well as the use of numbers)
- Visual-spatial: the ability to mentally visualize objects and spatial dimensions.
- Body-kinesthetic: the wisdom of the body and the ability to control physical motion.
- Musical-rhythmic: the ability to master music as well as rhythms, tones and beats.
- Interpersonal: the ability to communicate effectively with other people and to develop relationships.
- Intrapersonal: the ability to understand one’s own emotions, motivations, inner states of being, and self-reflection.

The verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences are the ones most frequently used in traditional school curricula. A more balanced curriculum that incorporates the arts, self-awareness, communication, and physical education may be useful to leverage the intelligences that some students may have.

Historical data and historical records are readily available to assist in many decision problems, the application of this information is called *cumulative intelligence*. Often historical data is incorrectly managed and due to over complication of their weighting and

application in a decision making process is ignored. The management and effective use of cumulative intelligence in the decision making process is critical.

Daniel Goleman's model focuses on '*Emotional Intelligence*' (EI) as a wide array of competencies and skills that drive leadership performance. It consists of the following five areas:

- Self-awareness: one knows one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals and recognizes one's impact on others while using gut feelings to guide decisions.
- Self-regulation: manages or redirects one's disruptive emotions and impulses and adapts to changing circumstances.
- Social skills: one manages others' emotions to move people in the desired direction.
- Empathy: one recognizes, understands, and considers other people's feelings especially when making decisions
- Motivation: one motivates oneself to achieve for the sake of achievement.

To Goleman, emotional competencies are not innate talents, but learned capabilities that must be worked on and can be developed to achieve outstanding performance. Goleman believes that individuals are born with a general emotional intelligence that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies²³. Goleman's model of EI, has been criticized in the research literature as being merely "pop psychology." However, EI is still considered by many to be a useful framework especially for businesses.

Bruce Weinstein²⁴ premises that '*Ethical intelligence*' indeed creates the most fulfilling life. Weinstein lists principles of ethical intelligence as follows:

- Do no harm: harm is from minor harm to death. Prevent harm and minimize preventable harm.
- Make things better: flight attendant tells us, 'should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop down from the overhead area. Please put one over your own mouth before you attempt to help others.' Why? Because the only way we can hope to be of service to others is we are in good shape of ourselves.
- Respect others: ethically intelligent people show respect in the deeper sense by honoring the values, preferences, and most important, the rights of others.

- Be fair: fairness is about giving others their due resources.
- Be-loving: It seems hard to fathom in a business context, just think of care, for example petty gestures at work.

In fact, all five principles mentioned above provide the guidelines for making the best possible decisions in every area of life. These principles have legal, financial and psychological implications; and they are the core of ethical intelligence.

II. Essentials of thoughtful intelligence

The essentials of thoughtful intelligence are as follow:

1. Observation: observing self for self assessment.
2. Cleansing inside: (Greater Jihad).
3. Recognition: of relationship with human and natural resources.
4. Realization: of future effects of decisions in time and space.
5. Moral clarity: by an articulate human conception of moral justice.
6. Action: An ultimate sense of action and not of inefficient action
7. Righteousness: Thinking and comprehending that where the actions are counted; in the list of good deeds or bad deeds.

III. Supremacy of morals

Ethics are generally *accepted* moral principles; whereas morals are universally *appreciated* principles of righteousness. Values are described as individual or personal standards of what is valuable or important to an individual.

Moral values are those preferences that are integral to the moral reasoning process. A moral decision is a choice based on an individual's ethics, manners, character and what he believes is righteous behavior. Moral reasoning is the mental process that is set in motion to some decision of right or wrong in any moral dilemma.

Morals are universal in time and space: They have been appreciated in the past, are appreciated at present and it is assumed that they will be appreciated in future as well. In fact, morals may be defined as the conduct that reflects universal principles essential to leading a worthwhile life and for effective self-governance. For many leading founders of the nation state system, attributes of character such as justice, responsibility, perseverance, and others were thought to flow from an understanding of the rights and obligations of men²⁵.

'*Moral intelligence*' is the capacity to differentiate right from wrong and to behave based on the value that is believed to be right. Moral intelligence was first developed as a concept in 2005 by Doug

Lennick and Fred Kiel²⁶. Most of the research involved with moral intelligence agrees that this characteristic is ability-based. Therefore, moral intelligence is seen as a skill that can be further developed with practice. Moral intelligence is the central intelligence for all humans. Moral intelligence is distinct from emotional and cognitive intelligence²⁷.

There are two models of moral intelligence one was presented by Doug Lennick and Fred Kiel, authors of *Moral Intelligence* and the originators of the term. Both of them identified four competencies of moral intelligence in their models: integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion. The other model of moral intelligence was proposed by Michele Borba in her book '*Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*'. Borba registered seven essential virtues of moral intelligence: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance, and fairness. She gives a step-by-step plan for parents to teach their children these virtues in order to enhance their moral intelligence.

In shades of above content I move on *thoughtful intelligence* (see Table 1.1). It pertains to beliefs, values, rules and practices in past-present-future vis-à-vis moral capacity of an individual. Thoughtfulness has significant relationship with righteousness. It has been implied that different people take different decisions in a similar situation because of different levels of thoughtfulness. Thoughtful intelligence based on righteousness, assents to care for human & natural resources and norms of creative thinking to manage the present and future.

Table: 1 Thoughtful intelligence

Thoughtful intelligence is the higher order of thinking to train the mind-set to produce intention and actions. Thoughtful intelligence can be struggled for and acquired. It comprises of capacity to understand and realize the impact of one's thoughts, words and actions on the survival, dignity²⁸ and development of individuals, groups and nations. The impact can be realized in 'Time' (for how many days, weeks, months or years the impact will continue) and 'Space' (for how far geographical land with or without human beings will be effected). It establishes thoughtful thoughts. Per the inner paradigm²⁹: Thoughtful intelligence establishes and defends moral values in the individual against internal and external threats. This defense includes detection, prevention and response to threats through the use of moral beliefs, values, rules and practices. Thoughtful intelligence visions the eyes to observe and gives the courage³⁰ to understand befittingly suited to difficult times; and reveals compassion³¹ for moral development.

IV. Thoughtful intelligence works

Thoughtful intelligence bases the shared value³² of profit for the system of humanity, as this value is revealed and appreciated over time and space in all the human civilizations. It thoroughly benchmarks and fares contentment; it works with sorrow and happiness for a change by utilizing connectivity between the creator and his creations. It establishes respect of human beings means of humanity³³.

Iqbal says:

آدمیت احترام آدمی
باخبر شو از مقام آدمی

Humanity means respect of the mankind-learn to appreciate the true worth of man.

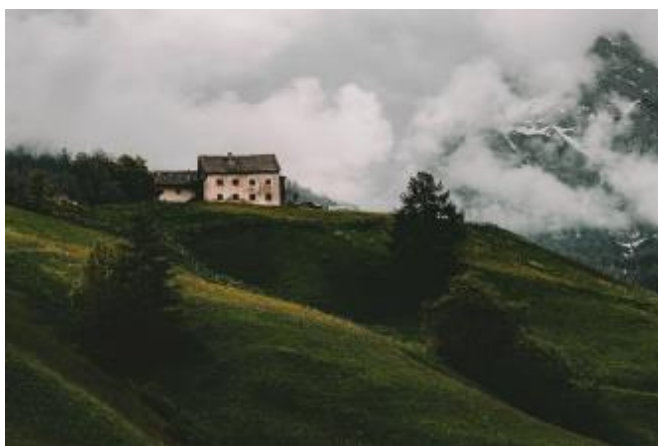
Thoughtful intelligence *builds thinking habits* that impact mental, emotional and physical states of the individual.

Thoughtfulness consists of specific capacity whereby the decision-maker longs for *sustainability of his/her decision* in time and space, whether his/her leadership status continues or not.

Thoughtful intelligence *evolves the thoughts* in the individual that eliminates everything extra to profitability to the system of humanity through inside cleansing.

Thoughtful intelligence *expands the human sensors* so that the individual becomes sensitive about others and flourishes in the greater sense of belonging.

Thoughtful intelligence is *aspired by wisdom*, supported by knowledge, uttered by tongue and displayed through practice.



Thoughtful intelligence *insinuates the sense of environmental sustainability*. It reminds the “7th generation” principle taught by Native Americans: that in every decision, be it personal,

governmental or corporate, we must consider how it will affect our descendents seven generations into the future; so that the pristine sky, field and mountains in this photo will still be here for them to enjoy. Thoughtful intelligence offers capacity of decision making, inquiring and *learning*.

Thoughtful intelligence *graces a variety of cloaks*³⁴ (See Table. 1.2) fit into all scenarios of righteousness vs wrong, sorrow vs happiness, and good vs evil.

Table 2 Thoughtful intelligence and the variety of cloaks

| | |
|----|--|
| 1. | <i>Cloak of Patience</i> |
| 2. | <i>Cloak of Generosity</i> |
| 3. | <i>Cloak of Commitment</i> |
| 4. | <i>Cloak of Appreciation</i> |
| 5. | <i>Cloak of Hospitality</i> |
| 6. | <i>Cloak of Confession</i> |
| 7. | <i>Cloak of Covering the others faults</i> |
| 8. | <i>Cloak of Condemnation</i> |
| 9. | <i>Cloak of Contributing the best to humanity</i> |

*What the individual would like to wear and when to wear?
Source: Self extract

Exercise

Count, how many cloaks you have as your belonging.

Thoughtful intelligence *empowers* because realization of the greater being and connections; makes an individual prismatic. *Thoughtful intelligence facilitates to acquire 'Khudi' as per the concept of 'Self' given by Allama Iqbal.*

Contentment is always evolved through the practices of chastity, piety, love and compassion. It happens when the individual wears the cloaks of appreciation, generosity, forgiveness, patience, hospitality, philanthropy and confession. Following are required to achieve this:

The standard operating methods to acquire thoughtful intelligence

The (*Tazkia Nafs-----Inside Cleansing*) inside cleansing of the individual's physical and metaphysical mechanisms. It erects the purity of self-submission to the system of humanity

Thought resolutions for the cleaned mind-set

Mutuality with nature and human beings as a source of change.

Informal moral development

Formal moral development.

Moral: Being thoughtless is the real threat to mankind's livability³⁵ on earth!

Exercise

Reserve the best quality of yours' to make the world livable for others.

Please rise to say:

May we are able to grow in thoughtful intelligence beyond material way of life.

Notes and Reference

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- ¹ "Islamic center for research and academics," accessed March 5, 2018 <http://icraa.org/hadith>
 - ² A mindset is described as the mental inertia of an individual. It is a set of ideas, beliefs, values, rules and practices used as the bases for making judgments and decisions. Mindset is a mental attitude that benchmarks an individual's intentions, words, and actions that impact the growth, expansion and success.
 - ³ Zubeida Mustafa is a Journalist who worked for DAWN from 1975 to 2008 and now writes a weekly column for Daily DAWN), Pakistan.
 - ⁴ Nicholas. Mackintosh, *IQ and Human Intelligence* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.
 - ⁵ Matthew R. Kutz, "Toward a Conceptual Model of Contextual Intelligence: A Transferable Leadership Construct" *Leadership Review*, Vol. 8 (Winter 2008): 18-31.
 - ⁶ Al-Quran, Bani Israel, Ayat: 70 'And We have certainly honored the children of Adam.'
 - ⁷ The inner paradigm is a framework containing all the accepted views of an individual about human life (past, present, and future); inclusive social, economic, political, and security dimensions.
 - ⁸ Courage is the ability to do something that frightens one: bravery.
 - ⁹ Compassion is the ability to give and to forgive.
 - ¹⁰ Moral values include: humbleness, love, kindness and modesty.
 - ¹¹ Internal threats include: arrogance, anger, vengefulness and lust in-side the individual.
 - ¹² External threats: arrogance, anger, vengefulness and lust in-others around the individual.
 - ¹³ The natural *environment* encompasses the interaction of all living species, climate, weather, and *natural* resources that affect human survival and economic activity.
 - ¹⁴ The *social environment* includes the immediate physical and *social* setting in which individual lives with certain developments. It includes the material and non material culture that the individual is educated.
 - ¹⁵ The economic environment includes the totality of *economic* factors, such as employment, income, inflation, interest rates, productivity, and wealth that influence the politico-economic institutions and the buying behavior of consumers.
 - ¹⁶ The *political environment* includes government and its institutions and legislations and the public and private stakeholders who operate and interact with or influence the social, economic and decision making systems of the state.

- ¹⁷ The *Judicial behavioral environment* is best understood as a function of the incentives and constraints that legal systems place on their judges in certain communities or states to impart justice to the individuals.
- ¹⁸ R.L. Thorndike, "Factor analysis of social and abstract intelligence." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 231-233. (1986): 27
- ¹⁹ H.Gardner, *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
- ²⁰ H. Gardner, *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- ²¹ Ibid
- ²² Gardner (1999) Op cit
- ²³ Daniel, Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2005).
- ²⁴ Weinstein, B. *Ethical Intelligence: Five Principles for Untangling Your Toughest Problems at Work and Beyond*. (California: New World Library, 2011).
- ²⁵ "Defining Civic Virtue: Launching Heroes & Villains with your Students," accessed on Dec 16, 2016, <http://billofrightsinstitute.org>
- ²⁶ M. Borba, *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).
- ²⁷ Ibid
- ²⁸ Al-Quran, Bani Israel, Ayat: 70 'And We have certainly honored the children of Adam.'
- ²⁹ The inner paradigm is a framework containing all the accepted views of an individual about human life (past, present, and future); inclusive social, economic, political, and security dimensions.
- ³⁰ Courage is the ability to do something that frightens one: bravery.
- ³¹ Compassion is the ability to give and to forgive.
- ³² Value of profit for the system of humanity is holistic, universal and sustainable.
- ³³ The quality of being human is comprised of two qualities:
- a. Benevolence: compassion, brotherly love, fellow feeling, humanness, kindness, kindheartedness, consideration, understand-ing, sympathy, tolerance, goodness, good-heartedness, gentleness, leniency.
 - b. Mercy: mercifulness, pity, tenderness, benevolence, charity, generosity, magnanimity.
- ³⁴ A loose outer garment, as a cape or coat that covers body or mindset for example, "He conducts his wealth under a *cloak* of generosity."
- ³⁵ **Liveability** is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

REVISITING IQBAL'S INTELLECTUAL
LEGACY: IN CONTEXT OF 1ST LECTURE
OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN ISLAM

Dr. Tahir Hameed Tanoli

ABSTRACT

Allama Iqbal's poetry and prose, particularly his seminal work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, remains a rich intellectual resource offering profound insights into spiritual and ethical life. Iqbal's lectures, delivered in response to a Westernized audience grappling with uncertainty about Islam's teachings, address themes that resonate today, particularly in the context of modern challenges. In an age where materialism, ideological confusion, and skepticism toward religious truths dominate, there is a pressing need to revisit Iqbal's thoughts for guidance. Iqbal emphasizes that spiritual insight, achievable through discipline and hard work, serves as a key to understanding both individual and societal dilemmas. His lectures explore how Islam, through its unified approach to the spiritual and material realms, offers answers to modern intellectual and existential questions. Iqbal identifies three critical issues: the implications of scientific discoveries, the dominance of materialism, and the misinterpretation of Sufism. He critiques how Sufism's essence has been distorted, reducing its role in empowering Muslims for active engagement in life. Iqbal's intellectual framework revolves around spiritual observation, deeply rooted in Sufism, as a legitimate source of knowledge. He highlights the need to integrate spiritual insight with modern scientific understanding and suggests that faith-based spiritual observation can drive moral behavior, providing strength to uphold high ethical standards. In his lectures, Iqbal distinguishes spiritual observation from empirical sciences, placing it in its own unique category. Iqbal also stresses that moral perfection aligns individuals with the divine plan, allowing them to transcend the duality of matter and spirit. He advocates for the practical transformation of faith into action, guided by figures like Rumi and Ibn Arabi, whose teachings provide key principles for spiritual development. Iqbal calls for a revival of Islamic Sufism, emphasizing that spiritual observation must be adapted to contemporary intellectual frameworks, making it accessible and meaningful for today's challenges. His work ultimately seeks to reassert the relevance of Islam as a dynamic and comprehensive worldview that harmonizes spiritual and material aspects of life.

Allama Iqbal's poetry and prose, particularly his Lectures, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, form an intellectual and cultural treasure that continues to offer life-affirming insights. In light of evolving circumstances, it is essential to revisit and re-interpret Iqbal's writings in the context of current challenges. When Iqbal delivered his Lectures, his audience consisted of those deeply influenced by Western intellectual thought, many of whom were uncertain about Islam's foundational teachings and concepts. Consequently, the themes Iqbal addressed and the manner in which he presented them were shaped by the demands of his time.

Today, the task before us is to explore how Iqbal's ideas, as conveyed in his Lectures, can be harnessed to address the unique challenges we face. While the issues that preoccupied Iqbal's original audience may differ from those confronting readers today, the need for guidance remains. Contemporary challenges go beyond mere fascination with Western thought. They now encompass questions about the purpose of collective existence after independence, a weakening belief in the ideological foundation upon which this nation was established, and the diminishing relevance of traditional religious and spiritual institutions. Additionally, there is an increasing skepticism regarding religious truths.

The pressing question now is: how can Iqbal's thought provide solutions to these modern dilemmas? Iqbal emphasized that spiritual insight is not attainable without dedication, hard work, and disciplined effort. Achieving spiritual insight requires the establishment of a clear framework that meets these demands, guiding us toward understanding and addressing the challenges of our time.

The central aim of the ideas presented by Allama Iqbal in his Lectures is to demonstrate the relevance and authenticity of Islam in light of the evolving trends in civilization, knowledge, and thought worldwide.¹ Iqbal outlines several reasons for this necessity:

1. Modern Scientific Developments and Discoveries: As humanity gains mastery over the environment and the universe, new perspectives emerge that challenge traditional views. Man's growing control over the forces of nature, coupled with new scientific experiences, is transforming the way old problems are understood. A fresh perspective and approach are required to address longstanding issues. Human intellect is now expanding beyond the traditional

limits of time, space, and causality. With the advancement of scientific thought, particularly after Einstein's theory of relativity, our understanding of knowledge, perception, and the universe has changed.²

2. Dominance of Materialism : Another significant factor was the materialistic ideology promoted by communist Russia during Iqbal's time, which aggressively propagated atheism and anti-Islamic sentiments. This materialistic emphasis, though rooted in communism, persists in various forms even today. Iqbal recognized the need to counter this narrative and reaffirm the spiritual and ethical foundations of Islam in response to materialist ideologies that continue to influence modern society.³

3- Misinterpretation of Sufism- A Historical Crisis : Sufism, which once served as a profound spiritual force for awakening the inner life of Muslims, was misinterpreted over time, leading to negative consequences. Instead of fostering inner strength and active participation in life, it became associated with false monasticism, ignorance, and spiritual slavery.⁴ Allama Iqbal noted that the mystical approach which had been the most vibrant expression of religious life in both the East and the West during the Middle Ages, had now largely failed. This failure, particularly in the Muslim world, stemmed from the distortion of Sufi teachings.

Under this distorted form, Sufism no longer inspired the common person to develop their inner life and engage actively in the world. Instead, it promoted passivity, detachment from worldly responsibilities, and an acceptance of ignorance and spiritual subjugation. The dynamic role of Sufism, which had once preserved the vitality of Islamic civilization, was diminished to the point where it no longer served the common man. Rather than preparing individuals to participate in history and contribute to societal progress, it taught resignation and contentment with the status quo.

This decline in Sufism's role was especially evident during the period of Western imperialism in the subcontinent. The distorted version of Sufism was manipulated to strip Muslims of the true spirit of *Jihad* (struggle) and *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning), depriving them of the vigor needed to resist colonialism and engage in meaningful progress. Iqbal highlighted this misinterpretation as a critical issue, urging a revival of Sufism's true purpose—reinvigorating the spiritual and practical life of Muslims.⁵

Allama Iqbal emphasizes that the purpose of the Holy Qur'an is to cultivate a deep and holistic awareness of the various dimensions of human existence, particularly in relation to God and the universe. This awareness is grounded in the principle of unity,

which Islam articulates in a comprehensive manner. Iqbal outlines the following key points regarding this concept of unity:

1. Unity Between Spiritual and Material Realms : Iqbal asserts that Islam does not reject the spiritual aspect; rather, it builds upon them in a more comprehensive way. In Islam, the spiritual principle that governs the relationship between man and God is not detached from the material world, but rather intertwined with it.⁶ Islam teaches that the material world is not in conflict with spirituality; instead, external materialism is illuminated and guided by the light of spirituality. Therefore, true spiritual development requires aligning our connection with the external forces of the material world through our inner spiritual light. This unified approach integrates both spiritual and material aspects of existence, creating a balanced and holistic worldview.⁷

2. The Interconnection of the Ideal and the Real : Iqbal emphasizes that the material and spiritual aspects of the universe are not contradictory, but deeply connected. He argues that the ideal (spiritual) and the real (material) are not in opposition, but rather the ideal gives life and meaning to the real. The real, or material existence, draws its vitality from the ideal, and without this connection, life becomes fragmented and divided. The ideal infuses the real with purpose, and through this relationship, we can gain deeper understanding and realization of the ideal. This balance between the ideal and the real is crucial for maintaining the organic unity of life.⁸

3. Islam's Unified Approach to Reality : In Islam, there is no separation between the mathematical exterior (the measurable aspects of the universe) and the biological interior (the life forces within). Similarly, there is no division between the subject (the individual) and the object (the material world). Unlike other religious or spiritual systems that may separate or conflict the spiritual self from the material world, Islam emphasizes their mutual relationship. Islam provides a path through which humanity can conquer and harmonize the material world using a realistic, spiritually guided approach. Iqbal stresses that the unity of life, as outlined by Islam, affirms man's relationship with both God and the universe, ensuring that the ideal and the real are in harmony.⁹

Iqbal further elaborates on this concept in his social and political thought, where he asserts that the religious objectives of Islam are organically linked to its social order. He stresses this unity in his famous Allahabad Lecture, where he declares that Islam's religious goals are directly tied to its social and political structures. This, according to Iqbal, reflects the Islamic understanding of life as an

integrated whole, where spiritual, social, and material realms work in concert to promote human progress and development. Iqbal says:

The religious ideal of Islam is, therefore, organically related to the social order which it has created.¹⁰

To fully grasp the essence of the first Lecture, it is essential to consider the following key points:

1. Purpose and Context of the Lectures : It is important to understand why these Lectures were delivered, their overarching purpose, and the specific questions they addressed. What were the pressing issues that Allama Iqbal sought to resolve through his discussions? The Lectures were aimed at answering critical questions related to the relationship between religion, modernity, and evolving intellectual trends, providing guidance in a time of ideological confusion.

2. The Dynamic Nature of the Qur'an's Worldview : According to Iqbal, the Qur'anic worldview is anti-classical, meaning that it does not view the universe as static or finalized. Rather, the Qur'an presents the universe as dynamic, constantly evolving, and marked by continuous creation. The present age requires a re-examination of the relationship between God, the universe, and humanity based on the consciousness imparted by the Qur'an. It is essential to redefine humanity's role in light of these changing perceptions of the universe and provide a solid foundation for moral and ethical character development in today's world.

3. Spiritual Basis and Rational Understanding : The comprehensive foundation for this understanding is spiritual, and its effects can be observed in the material world. The question arises: how can we comprehend this spiritual basis using rational, logical, and emotional observation? Iqbal argues that spirituality is not an abstract concept but one that can be approached through reason, emotion, and logic. By using these faculties, it is possible to recognize the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual realms, thereby gaining a more profound understanding of the universe and our place within it.

4. Spiritual Observation as Knowledge: The foundation of knowledge discussed by Allama Iqbal is supported and validated through spiritual observation, a phenomenon deeply rooted in Sufism. In the context of Iqbal's Lectures, the term "religion" does not refer to religion in its conventional sense, but rather to the spiritual system of Islam, specifically Sufism.¹¹ Iqbal's aim in the first Lecture is to establish spiritual observation, or religious experience, as a legitimate and authentic source of knowledge. He seeks to demonstrate that revelation, as a form of spiritual insight, is the

ultimate guide for humanity. This spiritual observation, therefore, is not only central to Iqbal's purpose but also engages with contemporary intellectual challenges.

5. The Ethical Power of Spiritual Observation: The knowledge gained through spiritual observation is essential for the ethical foundation of life. The motivation, courage, passion, and willingness to sacrifice required to uphold high moral values and priorities are not derived from intellectual reasoning alone but are driven by the spiritual force of religion. The religious spirit empowers individuals to practice such elevated moral standards in a meaningful way.¹²

6. Distinction of Spiritual Observation as a Unique Source of Knowledge beyond Western Thought: In his first Lecture, Iqbal discusses the characteristics of religious experience by referencing William James to address the concerns of a Westernized audience. However, Iqbal clarifies that these characteristics, while necessary for the time, do not represent the full scope of spiritual observation. They are not intended to serve as definitive descriptions of spiritual phenomena. Iqbal not only addresses the potential criticisms of these characteristics but also distinguishes spiritual observation as a distinct source of knowledge, separate from the empirical sciences such as physics, chemistry, or psychology. Despite being informed by modern scientific thought, Iqbal places spiritual observation in its own unique category, as he explains further in subsequent discussions.

7. Moral Perfection and Spiritual Dominion: The firm foundation of spiritual observation is rooted in morality, which is why Sufism is often described as the embodiment of pure ethics. A person who attains moral perfection becomes eligible to align with the divine will or participate in the divine plan. High moral standards, along with the alignment of one's inner and outer self, enable a person to transcend the duality of matter and spirit. Attributes like kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence are essential for conquering the universe in a spiritual sense. According to Allama Iqbal, these qualities allow individuals to embody divine attributes and, in accordance with God's will, unlock the potential to govern and influence the universe.

8. From Belief to Action: Spiritual observation is about transforming faith from mere conceptual belief into a tangible and active reality of life. It is not limited to theoretical discussions or academic debates but requires a continuous moral and practical struggle. This struggle must be undertaken under the guidance of experienced teachers who have already traversed these spiritual stages. Iqbal himself regarded Maulana Rumi as his spiritual guide,

and Rumi's *Masnawi* provides key principles for navigating this journey. Additionally, the teachings of the great Sufi master Sheikh Akbar Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, particularly in his work *Futubat al-Makkiyya*, offer detailed insights and interpretations on these guiding principles.

9. Living Faith Through Spiritual Observation- A Path to Divine Connection and Universal Understanding: Thus, spiritual observation is not an isolated intellectual exercise; it is a lived, moral practice that enables individuals to actualize their faith, leading to a deeper connection with the divine and a greater understanding of the universe and their role within it.

10. Reviving Islamic Sufism: an Approach to Spiritual Observation and Knowledge: In these Lectures, Allama Iqbal laid the groundwork for the revival of Islamic Sufism by establishing spiritual observation as a legitimate source of knowledge. He emphasized the need to develop methods of spiritual observation that align with the intellectual framework of the modern mind, rather than relying solely on extraordinary effort and struggle. Iqbal recognized that these methods should be accessible and relatable to contemporary individuals, allowing them to understand and adopt this approach. Finding the answer to what these methods entail is essential for guiding individuals on the path of spiritual realization in today's world.

Summary of the First Lecture

The starting point of this Lecture is centered around fundamental questions regarding the nature of the universe, our relationship with it, and our attitude toward it. Understanding the universe in its true form and accurately defining humanity's place within it are crucial concerns. Allama Iqbal argues that only religion offers a comprehensive answer to these questions. The primary goal of religion is to transform and guide both the inner and outer aspects of human life. Therefore, understanding the essential truths necessary to grasp the fundamental teachings of religion is crucial for developing a complete understanding of our existence and purpose. At the outset of the first Lecture, Allama Iqbal outlines the objectives, which extend beyond simply understanding religious beliefs. He emphasizes the necessity of reinterpreting religious truths in light of modern scientific discoveries and evolving research. The rise of scientific thinking has led to challenges from anti-religious ideas, particularly due to the growing influence of materialism, as exemplified by communist Russia in its subcontinental neighborhood. Additionally, Muslim thinkers, swayed by modern material trends, have begun adopting ideas that conflict with

Qur'anic teachings. With the increasing fear of Western intellectual dominance, it has become crucial to address the need for a modern reformation of Islamic thought to counter these influences and present Islam as a relevant and dynamic worldview in the contemporary era.

One of the key purposes of the Lectures is to present Islam as a universal message for all of humanity. The exploration and understanding of the rational foundations of the universe were initiated by the Holy Prophet himself. The Holy Qur'an provides the spiritual framework that defines humanity's relationship with both the universe and God. According to the Qur'an, there is no conflict or contradiction between the spiritual and material realms. Humanity is entrusted with a creative role and the ability to fulfill God's divine purposes. However, in the past, Muslim thought struggled to fully comprehend and articulate these profound concepts within the Qur'an. This lack of understanding led to an over-reliance on Greek philosophical thought, which caused the life-affirming and dynamic aspects of the Qur'anic message to remain obscured from the perspective of many Muslim thinkers.

The spiritual foundation of man's relationship with God is both understandable and observable. Through faith, an individual can establish a connection with God and acquire knowledge of Him. Human thought plays a significant role in realizing the truth of faith. Faith is not merely a concept; it is a lived practice. Religion is not just an abstract idea or an empty belief system; it is a living, empirical reality. In Islam, there is no contradiction between objectivity and reality. The comprehensibility and observability of the spiritual basis of man's relationship with God are evident in the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), who introduced the understanding of psychological conditions and phenomena. The process of turning faith into an experiential reality is rooted in Islamic thought, rather than being influenced by Western philosophies. This difference highlights a key distinction between the methods of Kant and Al-Ghazali, with Islamic methodology providing a more holistic approach to faith and experience.

This Lecture demonstrates that spiritual observation affirms the faith-based foundation of life. Human thought, through the heart, possesses the unique ability to grasp the reality and efficacy of faith. It is faith, rather than mere rational arguments, that enables individuals to face life's challenges with resilience. The world is full of suffering, and navigating it successfully cannot be achieved solely through rational rules, standards, or measures; spiritual observation is essential for attaining stability. While spiritual observation provides

certainty about our inner foundation and connection with the Self, it is also rich with insight.

In explaining the characteristics of spiritual observation, Allama Iqbal references William James, likely to address the intellectual capacity of his audience at the time. However, while discussing James' views, Allama also critiques several aspects, deeming them insufficient for fully understanding religious experience. He argues that religious passion and spiritual observation cannot be validated as knowledge through mere psychological analysis. This, he notes, is the same failure encountered by modern psychologists like John Locke and David Hume, whose approaches also fell short in capturing the true essence of spiritual experience. The limitations of the characteristics described by William James become evident when we consider that they cannot be applied to the centuries-long religious experiences of Islamic Sufism, nor do they offer any scientific or moral utility. Allama Iqbal himself did not provide examples of this nature in his Lectures. It appears that the concept of spiritual observation, as discussed by Allama, and exemplified through the practical experience of Islamic civilization, needs to be redefined. A clear and structured method for understanding and applying spiritual observation must be established to ensure its relevance and practicality in the modern context.

Main Points of the First Lecture

In the first Lecture, Allama Iqbal outlines the following key points:

1. Purpose of the Lectures :

(i) Understanding the core truths of religion is essential for achieving higher ideals in our lives.

(ii) A new interpretation of religious facts is crucial in light of modern scientific discoveries.

(iii) There is a need to confront the challenges posed by materialism and anti-religious ideologies, particularly from communist Russia.

(iv) As Muslim thinkers are increasingly influenced by modern materialist trends and adopting views contrary to the Qur'an, a reformulation of religious thought is imperative in the contemporary era.

(v) It is vital to address the risk of being intellectually dominated by the West.

(vi) The primary aim of the Lectures is to present Islam as a universal message for all of humanity, offering guidance for life.

2. The Holy Qur'an's Perspective on the Relationship Between Man and the Universe

(i) Islam was the first to initiate research and interpretation on the rational foundation of the universe.

(ii) The Holy Qur'an establishes the universal spiritual foundation for the relationship between man, the universe, and God.

(iii) The Qur'an denies any conflict between the spiritual and material dimensions of existence.

(iv) Humanity possesses the capacity for creative activity and is entrusted with fulfilling God's purposes.

(v) In the past, Muslim thought deviated from the Qur'anic understanding of the universe, leading to a disconnect from its true teachings.

3. The Spiritual Basis of Man's Relationship with God is Understandable and Observable

(i) Through faith, a person can establish a relationship with God and gain knowledge of Him.

(ii) Human thought plays a crucial role in realizing the reality of faith.

(iii) Religion is not just a concept or empty belief; it is a living, experiential reality.

(iv) In Islam, there is no conflict or contradiction between the spiritual and material realms.

(v) The Prophet ﷺ laid the foundation for understanding psychological conditions and phenomena in Islam.

(vi) Islamic thought, rather than Western philosophies, offers a stronger basis for transforming faith into a lived experience.

(vii) There are key differences between the approaches of Kant and Al-Ghazali in understanding faith and reason.

4. Spiritual Observation Validates the Faith-Based Foundation of Life

(i) Human reason is the faculty that enables the perception of the reality and effectiveness of faith.

(ii) The heart is the center of thought that observes and comprehends the true reality of faith.

5. Facing Life's Challenges and Remaining Resilient is Achieved Through Faith, Not Rational Arguments

(i) Human stability amidst the trials and sufferings of life is made possible through the power of faith.

(ii) Spiritual observation and perception play a crucial role in providing the strength and insight needed to endure and overcome these challenges.

6. Characteristics of Spiritual Observation

- (i) The relationship between the characteristics of modern psychology and spiritual observation.
- (ii) Allama Iqbal critiques the characteristics outlined by William James and does not find them fully satisfactory in capturing the depth of spiritual observation.

Notes and References

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- ¹ I **propose** to undertake a philosophical discussion of some of the basic of ideas of Islam, in the hope that this may, at least, be helpful towards a proper understanding of the meaning of **Islam as a message to humanity**. Allama Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.7
- ² *Reconstruction*, p.6.
- ³ *Reconstruction*, p.6.
- ⁴ *Reconstruction*, pp.148-149.
- ⁵ And in the Muslim East it has, perhaps, done far greater havoc than anywhere else. Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life, and thus preparing him for participation in the march of history, it [i.e. mysticism] has taught him a **false renunciation** and made him perfectly **contented** with his **ignorance** and **spiritual thralldom**. *Reconstruction*, pp.148-149
- ⁶ Islam fully agrees with this insight and supplements it by the further insight that the **illumination** of the new world thus revealed is not something foreign to the world of matter but **permeates it through and through**. *Reconstruction*, p.7
- ⁷ ... but by a proper adjustment of man's relation to these **forces** in view of the **light** received from the world **within**. *Reconstruction*, p.7
- ⁸ *Reconstruction*, p.7.
- ⁹ *Reconstruction*, pp.7-8.
- ¹⁰ Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, p.8.
- ¹¹ It is, then, in the sense of this last phase in the development of religious life that **I use the word religion** in the question that I now propose to raise. Religion in this sense is known by the unfortunate name of **Mysticism**, which is supposed to be a life-denying, fact-avoiding attitude of mind directly opposed to the radically empirical outlook of our times. Yet **higher religion**, which is only a search for a larger life, **is essentially experience** and recognized the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do so. It is a genuine **effort to clarify human consciousness**, and is, as such, as critical of its level of experience as Naturalism is of its own level. *Reconstruction*, pp.143-144
- ¹² This is the reason why **pure thought** has so **little influenced men**, while **religion** has always **elevated individuals**, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life,The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas of the basis of a **revelation**, which, speaking from the **inmost depths of life**, internalizes its own apparent externality. *Reconstruction*, p.142